

## Convention Goers Were Wide Awake in Seattle

TOBY HARRIS

Once again, the goals for the annual AJL conference—to greet and meet colleagues, network, and learn—were realized and valued! Evaluations were reviewed and the 45th annual AJL convention, held in Seattle in July, was overwhelmingly deemed a positive and satisfying experience. The downtown Seattle location, Fairmont Olympic Hotel, site visits and food were well liked and the committee was complimented many times over (which we heartily appreciate).

Some of the favorite sessions, based on the evaluations returned, included the ever-popular Sydney Taylor Awards Committee presentations featuring the authors and the critics; the Seattle Public Library reader's advisory and tour, and the Teen Trends presentation. Many positive comments were made in support of the off-site sessions, the local Jewish history, and Cantor Isaac Azose, who led us in a Sephardic Birkat HaMazon, and shared insights into the Seattle Sephardic community. Other highlights were the Judaica librarianship roundtable and presentations on AJL and the social Web, processing collections, Yiddish culture, and the National Library of Israel. Evaluators rated almost all sessions highly and spoke glowingly of many others they attended. The only prevalent complaint was that there were too many good choices offered at the same time, and not enough free time.

Many books were purchased from the exhibitors and everyone went home happy, if reluctantly. As attendees returned home, Seattlites breathed a sigh of relief and satisfaction. We were so very proud to host the conference and to show off our area's talents and sights. You can listen to podcasts of most of the sessions at [jewishlibraries.org/podcast](http://jewishlibraries.org/podcast).



More convention highlights appear on pages 23-25.



Top: Mount Rainier seen from Downtown Seattle  
Above: After the ballgame: Elliot Gertel at Safeco Field  
Right: Yossi Galron, after delivering the Feinstein Lecture



All photographs by Elliot H. Gertel

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## President's Message

JAMES ROSENBLUM

Hello. I've already have occasion to praise our Seattle convention committee, but I want once more to thank all of the hard working volunteers, led by Toby Harris and her convention committee. The sessions were wonderful, the hotel was very nice, and we had an opportunity to enjoy the local seafood. Those of you who were unable to attend the convention or who missed some of the sessions have the opportunity to hear them on podcast. Everyone has his or her favorite sessions. My own favorites include the discussion of Jewish names, rare book and manuscript cataloging, and evaluating out of print book dealers. I look forward to next year's convention in Montreal, and to many more interesting presentations.

I want to welcome Uri Kolodney to the position of newsletter editor. I look forward to his leadership at a time when we will be reviewing all aspects of our outreach to members and those beyond our organization. He will have an opportunity to influence all of our discussions about formats (paper or electronic), and has the experience to help implement whatever decisions the council makes.

As I write we are in the middle of upgrading our Web site. By the time you read this article, the process will hopefully be nearing completion.

We are increasing our outreach to synagogue administrators, rabbis, principals, and others who need to understand the importance of Judaica libraries, run by trained and experienced librarians. We welcome all suggestions on how to make the presence of Judaica libraries in schools, synagogues, and centers critical to Jewish education. The same applies, of course, to universities, museums, and archives.

## AJL Membership Survey

RACHEL LEKET-MOR AND JOYCE LEVINE

The divisional presidents of AJL are pleased to announce an important new project that will assist the association with planning for the future of Jewish libraries: a member survey. Through the survey, we attempt to address demographic questions about the make-up of the AJL membership as well as broad issues regarding the profession. Our ultimate goal is to study current trends in Judaica libraries in order to anticipate future developments.

We will collect general data such as age, education level, salary range, and anticipated plans for retirement, as well as job responsibilities and library setting. The survey will be conducted anonymously over a secure Web page; no data will be shared out.

The Survey Committee consists of members from SSC and RAS divisions and is co-chaired by the divisional presidents, Joyce Levine and Rachel Leket-Mor. The committee is charged to develop a questionnaire, collect and analyze responses, and report the results in a written document to be shared with the AJL Execu-

tive Board, Council, and general membership. Since the findings will be of such great value to us all, the committee hopes to achieve 100% participation.

How will the survey benefit you? Based on accurate information about members, their libraries, and their needs, AJL will be able to develop tools to promote libraries and strengthen the position of Judaica librarians. AJL members will be able to use statistical figures when demonstrating the value of their libraries to their administrators, negotiate employment terms, or prove the necessity of additional resources.

When you receive the survey request via e-mail, please complete it promptly. It will take only about 10 minutes of your time. Not only will it help us to develop short- and long-term goals once we know more about our members and their needs, but it will help AJL to fulfill its mission, to "promote Jewish literacy through enhancement of libraries and library resources and through leadership for the profession and practitioners of Judaica librarianship."

# Libby White: AJL Newsletter Editor Extraordinaire

Libby White has retired from the position of the Association of Jewish Libraries' newsletter editor after serving in that position since 2004. As editor, she brought interesting articles, essential book reviews, and news of our members to the association in every issue of the quarterly periodical. The newsletter is one of the chief means of communicating with the more than 1000 members of AJL. This past year, Libby continued as editor even though she was simultaneously working on her doctoral thesis and recovering from a stroke.

Libby started her career as a librarian in the public library system in Syracuse, New York. She became active in AJL when she moved to Baltimore. She was a valued member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, and later served as its chair. Libby took on the daunting task of editing all the articles sent to her and soliciting articles on topics of interest. Working with Libby always was a great pleasure. Her professionalism, quick mind, good sense, and sense of humor will be sorely missed. We wish her all the best in her pursuit of her doctorate and look forward to hearing about her new endeavors.

With love, admiration, and gratitude on behalf of the entire organization,

Susan Dubin  
AJL Past President

Thank you, Libby, with a standing ovation. Farewells are hard. Saying goodbye to Libby White as she leaves the post of newsletter editor-in-chief is painfully so. Libby improved our quarterly from a workhorse rag to a readable, professional, intelligent journal. Her wit, wisdom, sterling vocabulary, and brisk writing style pervaded the spirit and text of each issue. She added columns that personalized our organization, radiating warmth and caring for one another as well as books. She poked and prodded section editors, improving the quality of the content and the journalism. No matter her job, her Ph.D. load, or her health, Libby dedicated herself to AJL, to producing the best publication, to meeting deadlines even when technology failed her. Libby gave AJL a product we can be proud of. In return, we give Libby heartfelt, grateful thanks for her loyal support of AJL and a standing ovation for a job well done.

With loving wishes for success on your thesis and a return to full health, Libby, as Primo Levi might have cried, and Catullus definitely did, we say: Ave atque valé. We will miss you.

Ellen G. Cole

The *AJL Newsletter* team is grateful to have had the opportunity to work for the past six years with Libby White, an expert editor and consummate professional. We wish her the best of health and continued success in all her future endeavors.

## AJL Online

Visit the AJL Web site at [www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org).

Subscribe to Hasafran, AJL's electronic discussion list. Send the message: "sub hasafran [your first and last name]" to: [listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu](mailto:listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu).

AJL is now on Facebook. Become a fan.

## AJL Scholarship Fund

SARAH BARNARD

You have an opportunity to help support a library student and at the same time promote Judaica librarianship by making donations to the AJL Scholarship Fund. Each year AJL awards scholarships of \$1000 to two talented library science students who show an interest in pursuing a career in Judaica librarianship.

Donating to the fund is a meaningful way to recognize simchas, honor the memory of a loved one, or wish someone a speedy recovery. Please remember to include the addresses of the family of those honored or remembered so that we can notify the appropriate individuals. Send your donation to Sarah M. Barnard, Hebrew Union College-Klau Library, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220. A thank you note is sent to each donor.

Here is a list of some recent donations to the fund:

- From Pearl Berger in memory of David Gilner's mother Anita Gilner
- From Ellen Kovacic in memory of Yaffa Weisman's father
- From Sarah Barnard in memory of Yaffa Weisman's father
- From Roberta Berman in loving memory of Nomi Levy
- From the San Diego/Tijuana Chapter of AJL in loving memory of Nomi Levy
- From Ronda Rose in honor of Susan Dubin's presidency of AJL
- From Ronda Rose in memory of David Gilner's mother
- From Ronda Rose in memory of Nomi Levy
- From Ronda Rose in honor of Zachary Baker's new position at Stanford
- From Ronda Rose in honor of Libby White for her dedication to the *AJL Newsletter*
- From Ronda Rose in honor of Laurel Wolfson's receiving the Life Membership Award for 2010
- From Susan Dubin in honor of the outgoing board and council and best wishes for the incoming board and council
- From Laurel S. Wolfson in memory of Yaffa Weisman's father
- From Ellen Cole in honor of Libby White's outstanding tenure as editor of AJL's newsletter
- From Bob and Joan Schoettler in memory of Mr. Jerry Lavinski



# Chapter Chatter

TOBY ROSSNER

## News from the Chapter Relations

*Submitted by Irene K. Seff*

Our Seattle 2010 Convention was a resounding success on all counts—lots of advance work by National Committee organizers backed up by many dedicated local committee members, informative workshops with exciting presenters and speakers, a welcome bag *par excellence*, deserving award recipients, vendors with a wealth of materials, a wonderful hotel with courteous, well-trained staff, delicious food, and, best of all, the attendees, who came with energy, wisdom, and knowledge, eager to consult, network, share, and help. The post-convention energy continues to pulse throughout the year as chapter organizers return to their home communities to share with their members. Enjoy the reports below.

On another note, our Chapter Relations Committee has been realigned as follows: Irene K. Seff and Judith S. Greenblatt are now the two co-chairs; Amalia Warshenbrot and Enid Sperber are council representatives; and Toby Rossner will continue to write the Chapter Chatter column.

Watch the AJL Web site ([www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org)) as we continue to upgrade chapter information; please let us know if we need to change your data on the chapters page. Let us know how the Chapter Relations Team can help you.

## Houston Chapter

*Submitted by Lisa Klein and Judy Weidman*

Hello from Houston. Here are some thoughts from chapter member Judy Weidman, who attended the Seattle Convention and will share some of the knowledge she gained with our network throughout the year.

From July 4-7 I had the privilege of attending the AJL Annual Convention in Seattle. Not only was the cool weather a thrill, coming from the steamy South, but the wonderful hotel and gorgeous setting were pleasant enhancements to the conference. The sessions were very interesting, ranging from social networking to the ever-popular book reviews—what's hot, what's not—to a fascinating tour and talk at the renowned Seattle Public Library. There was even a lecture on Yiddish publishing in my home town of Winnipeg, Canada. What I most appreciated was the opportunity to meet and network with fellow librarians and to discuss common issues and challenges. I came away from the meeting feeling stimulated and eager to apply some of the information I gained.

## Michigan Chapter (AJL-MI)

*Submitted by Eileen Polk*

A committed group of librarians of AJL-MI met in August at the Henry & Delia Meyers Library and Media Center of the JCC of Metropolitan Detroit to enjoy lunch and discuss rebuilding the chapter. The result of the meeting may be seen in several upcoming events. Members will be invited to tour the new Novi Public Library of Novi, Michigan, in October. The tour leader will be chapter member Phyllis Weeks, children's and YA librarian. The Detroit Jewish Book Fair, the nation's oldest Jewish book fair, will

honor Jewish librarians during its programs at the JCC on Sunday, November 7. The January meeting will feature a workshop on innovative story hours, and throughout the year AJL-MI will co-sponsor a community-wide Hebrew Book Club that is based at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield.

## Jewish Libraries of the Southwest

*Submitted by Irene K. Seff*

At our April meeting we discussed formalizing our relationship with AJL and selected a new chapter name with a broader geographical scope: Jewish Libraries of the Southwest. Publicity about our new name was sent to *The Link*, the only state-wide monthly Jewish newspaper, which is sponsored and supported by the Federation of New Mexico. As a result of that article, Rabbi Chava Carp, librarian and Judaica studies teacher at Solomon Schechter Day School, made contact with her friend Beth Goldman, executive director of the Taos Jewish Center (TJC). And as a result of that contact, Rabbi Carp and I drove 2½ hours north on July 18 to Taos to meet with the TJC volunteers.

Relying solely on donated items, these very dedicated volunteer librarians have transformed a room of books into a light and bright, well-organized library. Their collection is now on a database, which is searchable by author, title, and subject. Chava and I talked about the importance of developing both a donation policy and a collection development policy. We brainstormed about ways to increase circulation and generate awareness of this new resource. I was able to offer many suggestions—ideas gleaned from colleagues at the convention and from my work with other chapters. I encouraged the group to become members of AJL, to sponsor one of their members to attend a convention, and to subscribe to Hasafran.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, September 26. In addition to Taos, we are busy increasing our outreach to congregations in Santa Fe and Las Cruces. For more information, please contact Rabbi Carp at (505) 266-8138.

## Florida West Coast Chapter

*Submitted by Sylvia Firschein*

Fifteen members of the Florida West Coast Chapter attended our annual restaurant get-together on Thursday, August 12. Members brought their volunteers, including Esta Blaxberg, former Paramus, New Jersey librarian. I pass along this idea to other small chapters. It gives chapter members an opportunity to get better acquainted in a relaxed atmosphere and to help one another solve library problems. Our chapter continues to grow; it now includes a synagogue librarian in St. Petersburg and Sun City.



TJC volunteers surround Irene K. Seff, center, in black shirt, during a July 18th visit. L-R: Joanne Forman, Robbie Scott, Irene, Marjorie Felsner, Beth Goldman, Bonnie Korman. Seated in front is Leah Alexander.

## Chicago Area Chapter

*Submitted by Daniel Stuhlman*

At its May meeting, the Chicago Area Chapter elected officers for the 2010-2011 year. Sharon Chefitz is the new president. After the business meeting we toured the Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation's building. The synagogue is built with "green" technologies, using renewable materials and materials from the former structure, and incorporating systems to minimize energy use. The sanctuary is a multi-use room.

On July 11, we had our annual summer planning session for the coming year. An important goal is outreach. Our first project is to collect information about ourselves so we can promote our expertise to the community. If you have any thoughts as to format and what kinds of information should be included please share with the group. The chapter has also established a Facebook group called Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago.

*Editors note:* In response to Daniel's request, I suggest these ideas, used over the years by the Rhode Island Chapter to publicize its libraries' contributions. Ask the editor of your local Jewish newspaper to include a chapter-produced section in each issue, highlighting library services and events. Topics could include:

- A listing of each of your libraries, including address, phone number, e-mail, and Web info, name of the librarian and his/her special areas of expertise, hours of operation, collection strengths, policy for lending to non-members, if this is an institution-based library.
- A book review by each of your chapter librarians—either by topic or age group.
- A union listing of author and book discussion events.
- A listing and summary of the Sydney Taylor Book Award selections using the reviews of the award committee's members. (Be sure to attribute the review to the STBA Committee reviewer.)

Sponsor a chapter community event (author, storyteller, short story discussion). List the program in every temple or synagogue bulletin and service announcement. Publicize it on the Web. To guarantee a "base" attendance, consider a joint venture with another organization, e.g., Hadassah, that has regularly-scheduled meetings.

## New York Metropolitan Area (AJL-NYMA)

*Submitted by Hallie Cantor, edited by Rita Lifton*

NYMA's spring conference, Making the Holocaust Relevant in 2010, took place on June 10 at the Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center and Archives of Queensborough Community College. Dr. Arthur Flug (executive director of the center) opened the conference, and showed that he has taken the theme of relevance to heart by making the center an extension not only of the college but of the Queens community at large. For example, the Kupferberg Center hosts a weekly "Bagels & Talk" gathering for Holocaust survivors. At the other end of the age spectrum, the center has an innovative program to reach out to the college's student population of 15,000 (8% Jewish), representing 141 different nationalities and 61 languages. Dr. Flug has arranged five-month internships, during which twelve students of all nationalities meet one hour a week and engage

in activities—reading, watching videos, role playing—to help them learn about the Holocaust and to familiarize them with not just the cultural sensitivities of the mostly Eastern European survivors but of elderly people in general. Each intern is matched with a survivor to interview over the course of three weeks. Following their time together, the pairs return to speak to the group, with each intern introducing "his" survivor and describing the survivor's experiences during the Holocaust. The results of this program have been transformative.

The second presenter, Susan (Shaindy) Kurzmann (information literacy and reference coordinator at Ramapo College of New Jersey), spoke about Holocaust Centers in colleges and universities, which face the double burden of conveying not only the lessons of 20th-century Jewish history but also universal messages. The goals and objectives of the center must reflect the needs of the host college. The mission of Ramapo College's Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies is "to encourage and assist persons of all ages in learning the history and lessons of the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide ..." Founded in 1980, the center sponsors student-focused programs, symposia, lectures, and screenings. It has collaborated with other organizations to provide joint programs, which are win-win propositions because funding is shared and there is a potential for larger audiences. In conjunction with Ramapo College's Pre-med Club, the center hosted a lecture about medical experimentation under the Nazis. Together with Valley Chabad and the Chabad of North West Bergen County, the center held a very successful program on the movie *Defiance* and the real-life story behind it. Zvi Bielski, son of Zus Bielski, one of the brothers depicted in the movie, was the keynote speaker.

Holocaust centers in publicly funded colleges (as opposed to Jewish institutions) have a special set of tensions and concerns, such as avoiding political advocacy. The goal is not to turn people into supporters of Jewish causes but rather to inform them about a specific catastrophic event in recent Jewish history and to deliver general lessons about mass murder. As Ms. Kurzmann pointed out, it's a difficult balancing act because the unique character of the Holocaust has increasingly become blurred as Holocaust education is subsumed under general lessons about human rights. Where does the library fit into all this? The library serves the center through the ordering and cataloging of materials; book and film recommendations; information literacy sessions, which are faculty driven; one-on-one reference/research interviews with students; and LibGuides. Ms. Kurzmann emphasized that HaSafran is an invaluable source of ideas for books, films and programs.

Conference participants were also given a tour of the architecturally exciting Kupferberg Holocaust Center. The building is modern and angled with jagged glass "to commemorate Kristallnacht," as Dr. Flug explained. An audio recording of the conference and Ms. Kurzmann's PowerPoint presentation will be available in several months on NYMA's Web site, [www.ajlnyma.org](http://www.ajlnyma.org). The conference was organized by Roz Friedman, NYMA's president. The chapter's fall conference, which will be held at the Center for Jewish History in October, will focus on the information commons and embedded librarians.

Joyce Levine is stepping down from her position as NYMA treasurer to assume the presidency of AJL's SSC Division. Joyce

has been a superb treasurer, and we know that she will be a wonderful SSC president. Joyce, ali ve-hatslihi! Other NYMA members who hold national AJL positions are Rachel Glasser, Stephanie (Sarah Leah) Gross, Leslie Monchar, Leah Moskovits, and Tina Weiss. We are happy to announce that Noreen Wachs is NYMA's new treasurer.

### Long Island Chapter (LI-AJL)

*Submitted by Wendy A. Marx*

Our LI-AJL Chapter looks forward to new programs this year as we have a new program chairperson who is a children's librarian. Since our LIAJL membership is spread across Long Island, we hope accommodate all of our members by holding meetings in libraries that are further out on Long Island (not only those in Nassau County!).

Our program schedule will include book reviewing at a Judaica book store, celebrating Jewish Book month, and inviting Marcia Posner to be the keynote speaker at our public librarians meeting. I am looking forward to another great year with LI-AJL and to sharing what I learned at the AJL Seattle Convention with our members.

### Montreal Chapter

*Submitted by Marsha Lustigman*

Mazal tov to AJL-Montreal member Goldie Sigal on winning the Canadian Jewish Book Award for Yiddish. *Stingy Buzi and King Solomon* was written and illustrated by Goldie and includes a workbook to help students learn Yiddish. Goldie has been an active member of AJL-Montreal for many years; she was formerly the Judaica librarian at McGill University. She has been a presenter at AJL conventions, most recently on the Joe Fishstein Collection of Yiddish Poetry, whose catalogue she edited. More information can be found at [yiddish.forward.com/node/2848](http://yiddish.forward.com/node/2848).

### Greater Cleveland Chapter

*Submitted by Sean Martin*

The Greater Cleveland Chapter closed the 2009-2010 year with its annual dinner and program highlighting recommendations of newly published Jewish books for both children and adults—a preview of the lists members compile and distribute during Jewish Book Month. The program also included the installation of new officers, each of whom will serve a two-year term: president, Sean Martin; vice-president, Gerry Powers Volper; treasurer, Heather Lenson; corresponding secretary, Ilka Gordon; recording secretary, Andi Davidson; member at large, Eileen Kollins; and membership coordinator, Aimee Lurie. Chapter members were also pleased to honor longtime member Fran Freedman, who served as treasurer for many years. The chapter is very grateful for her service.

The 2010-2011 year promises to be an exciting one. Membership coordinator Aimee Lurie has launched the chapter's efforts to enter the age of social networking. Lurie has set up our Facebook page, Twitter account, and blog (<http://greater-clevelandjewishlibraries.wordpress.com/>). Our first blog post received 106 hits, and we've already been re-tweeted. So friend us on Facebook (Association of Jewish Libraries Greater Cleveland Chapter), follow us on Twitter (AJLGCC) and read our blog. We look forward to seeing you there.

### Israel Chapter

*Submitted by Ya'akov Aronson*

In the third issue of the *alon* of the Judaica Librarians' Group (Israel) links are provided to an extensive list of Hassidic rebbes and to a notice about an exhibition at the National Library of Israel commemorating the 250th anniversary of the death of the Ba'al Shem Tov and the 200th anniversary of the death of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (<http://safranim.wordpress.com/>).

### Northwest Chapter

*Toby Harris*

After the very exciting and successful 45th AJL conference ended and we all had to leave the lovely Fairmont Olympic Hotel in downtown Seattle, we had a great celebration, offered up our gratitude, and gave ourselves a little down time. But even before summer was over, we shifted our focus to building chapter community and capitalizing on the visibility we received. Though we're still caught in the learning curve of the social web, we created a Facebook group (Northwest Chapter, AJL). Recruiting members will drive our initial efforts. We have a broad geographic base and hope to begin conversation and connection online with our colleagues and friends throughout the Northwest. Our priorities will be determined as we gather members. Ideas include highlighting collections, getting our catalogs on the Internet, hosting guests at our meetings, providing wikis or discussion boards, and more. We also plan to take advantage of the many benefits of national AJL membership and listen to podcasts of several conference sessions we missed! You can reach us at [ajlnw@earthlink.net](mailto:ajlnw@earthlink.net) and on Facebook.

## AJL Member News

AJL member Anna Olswanger, who is a literary agent and author of the Sydney Taylor Honor Book *Shlemiel Crooks*, has created "Yerusha," a Web site and organization for Jewish women like herself, and Jewish men, past normal child-bearing age, who believe they may never have children, either biologically or by adoption. Anna envisions Yerusha as a way to bring older, childless Jews together, both online and in the real world, to explore the meaning and experience of being a childless Jewish adult. And she hopes participants will help each other discover ways to create their inheritance ("yerusha") for future generations. For more information about Yerusha, and to add to the discussion, visit [www.Yerusha.com](http://www.Yerusha.com). Please refer the Web site to any patrons who may be looking for resources for older, childless Jews.

On Sunday, September 5, Anne Dublin read *The Kugel Valley Klezmer Band* by Joan Betty Stuchner at the Ashkenaz Festival at the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto. She was accompanied by two klezmer musicians from New York City. This event was sponsored by the AJL-Ontario chapter. She'll also be presenting her own book, *The Orphan Rescue*, at the Toronto Jewish Book Fair in October.



# "Seeing is Believing"

The Ruth Diskin Films Documentary Collection



Photo from "The Beetle" by Yishay Orian

When you are looking for The best in Jewish and Israeli Documentary films RUTH DISKIN FILMS is the place for you. Our rich and diverse catalogue offers a wide range of films that address topics of interest to contemporary Jewish life In Israel and beyond.

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# Statement of Policy: Reviews for Children and Teens

ANNE DUBLIN AND LINDA SILVER

Around 150 books of Judaic content for children and teens are published each year. We try to review all or most of them in the Reviews for Children and Teens section of the *AJL Newsletter*. Our purpose is to publish concise, comparative, critical reviews of new trade books to assist readers in making informed selection choices for their libraries. We will not as a rule review text books, reprints, manuscripts, toy books, or adult books unless the latter are relevant to Judaic libraries.

Our volunteer reviewers are asked to provide a concise, critical evaluation of each book's literary and artistic quality, to compare it with others of its type, to indicate the suggested grade level, and to recommend or not recommend the book for purchase. Reviews of books that are not recommended as well as those of books that are recommended are published in the Children and Teens section. Guidelines that reviewers are asked to follow are included with every review book and appear below.

In addition to reviewing new books of Judaic content for children, the editors hope that the Children's and Teen's review section will become a forum for differing viewpoints about Judaic children's literature. Readers' comments are invited and should be addressed to either of the co-editors. The editors will print differing reviews of the same book at their discretion. We look forward to highlighting the growing field of Judaic children's literature, sharing our enthusiasm for it with readers, and providing support for those who endeavor to bring it to professional and public attention.

## Guidelines for Children's Book Reviewers

Reviews of children's books in the *AJL Newsletter* are intended to help books selectors make informed choices about the materials they buy for library collections and recommend for children to read. Reviews will be edited. High caliber professional reviews are the goal of the *AJL Newsletter*, so reviewers are urged to take these guidelines seriously and to contact the editors by e-mail (below) with any questions. *AJL* children's book reviewers must have signed permission forms allowing *AJL* to share their reviews with other media.

When you receive a book to review, it will have a due date on it—usually three weeks from the date it is mailed. If this is not enough time, please contact Linda Silver. E-mail your reviews to Linda Silver at [silverlr@roadrunner.com](mailto:silverlr@roadrunner.com).

*Reviews should not be longer than 250-300 words.* Your review should be descriptive enough to be helpful to colleagues who will not see the book. A brief summary of what the author is trying to convey should be included along with an evaluation of the book's literary and artistic qualities and its appropriateness for its intended readers. Comparisons with other books of a similar nature or by the same author are encouraged. Please avoid beginning reviews with the word "This" and the use of the personal pronoun "I" if possible.

For picture books, please consider in your evaluation: content, illustrations, medium (if you recognize it or if it is stated some-

where in the book) and style of illustrations, and format.

For fiction, please consider in your evaluation: genre, plot, setting, characterization, theme, and style.

For non-fiction, please consider in your evaluation: accuracy, authenticity, content, perspective, style, organization, illustrations, and format.

Reviewers are advised to read the article called "What is and What is Not a Jewish Book" in the May/June 2007 issue of the *AJL Newsletter* and to refer to the guidelines in *Excellence in Jewish Children's Literature: A Guide for Book Selectors, Reviewers, and Award Judges*, accessible on the *AJL* Web site, [www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org). Also helpful are two books: *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books* by Kathleen T. Horning (NY: Harper-Collins, 1997) and *Children's Literature In the Elementary School*, 7th ed., edited by Charlotte Huck, et al. (NY: McGraw Hill, 2001).

At the top of your review, state the author, title, illustrator, series, place of publication, publisher, copyright date, pages, price, ISBN. If the book has both an ISBN-13 and an ISBN-10, please give only the 13-digit number. If the book is a paperback, type Pbk. after the ISBN. No special formatting is required. Last, give your name, your place of employment, and the city where you live.

Reviewers are responsible for the accuracy of statements they make in their reviews. Reviews will be edited for grammar, style, and length.

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# Reviews of Titles for Children and Teens

EDITED BY ANNE DUBLIN

## In The Spotlight

**Alphin, Elaine Marie.** *An Unspeakable Crime: The Prosecution and Persecution of Leo Frank.* Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2010. 152 pp. \$22.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-8944-0. Gr. 7-12.

The tragic story of Leo Frank's wrongful conviction and execution for the murder of Mary Phagan is presented for young adults in this clearly-written, nicely-compiled volume. The events are related with a deft touch. Alphin holds the reader's attention with an exciting story, while avoiding sensationalism. Photographs and reproductions of newspapers draw the reader further into the time and events, and prevent this from feeling like a textbook. Presented chronologically, the book opens with Mary Phagan's activities the day she died, and concludes with information about the last eyewitness's full explanation of what he saw, as published in a Nashville newspaper in 1982, and Frank's posthumous pardon in 1986. Additional material, including a list of major figures in the case, a timeline, a glossary of legal terminology, a bibliography, and source notes enhance the value of this important volume. Highly recommended for libraries with collections in Jewish history and American history.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

**Chayil, Eshes.** *Hush.* New York: Walker/Bloomsbury, 2010. 343 pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-8027-2088-7. Reviewed from an ARC; finished copy will have a glossary and pronunciation guide. Gr. 10-adult.

In this powerful novel for teens, based on true events and written under a pseudonym, Gittel and Devory have been best friends for all of their ten years. They live in Borough Park and both of their families belong to a fictitious Chassidic sect. A time comes when Devory begins to behave strangely and desperately doesn't want to sleep at home. When Gittel sleeps over at Devory's one night, she sees Devory's fifteen-year-old brother, a yeshiva student, come into the room and "push Devory under the blanket." Just before Passover, Devory arrives at Gittel's house, goes into the bathroom, and hangs herself with a jump rope. No one acknowledges the abuse, instead claiming that Devory was mentally unstable. When Gittel graduates from high school, she goes to the police, but is afraid to make a report, fearing for her family's reputation and status. At eighteen, Gittel marries Yankel, a union arranged by a matchmaker. When Gittel learns she is pregnant, she wants to name the baby after Devory, but her family is appalled. The crisis sends Yankel to the rabbi, and Gittel to Devory's grave, where she prays and apologizes. She writes a letter to Devory about the communal responsibility for her death and goes to Devory's uncle, a newspaper editor, to demand he write an article about sexual abuse. Instead he publishes Gittel's letter, which gets hundreds of responses. With this behind them, Gittel and Yankel can move forward with their baby daughter, Devory.

Chapters that alternate between 2003, when the girls are ten, and 2009, when Gittel is sixteen, provide the template for the novel's authentic voice in each time period. The second part of the book takes place in 2010, when Gittel gets married. The story and the writing bring light to the nuances of the issues with insight and sensitivity. The development of the main character, the sense of place of the Chassidic community, and the ending, which brings closure without being unrealistically happy or trite, are all handled well. While intrinsically Jewish, this book could just have easily been written about another insular group or the Catholic priest scandal. *Hush* is highly recommended for mature teen readers.

Kathe Pinchuck, Clifton, NJ

**Pinkwater, Daniel.** *Beautiful Yetta: The Yiddish Chicken.* Illus. by Jill Pinkwater. New York: Feiweil and Friends (Macmillan), 2010. 32 pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-312-55824-6. Gr. K-2.

A deadpan style and mobile pictures combine to produce delicious hilarity. Organically raised (this is a very *au courant* tale), Yetta escapes from her crate during delivery in Brooklyn. How does the country chicken fare in the city? Not very well until an act of brave kindness (yes, Yetta is beautiful inside and out) turns a stranger into a friend that instructs her in city life. Word balloons deliver this light-hearted multilingual tale. Pinkwater's hero, Yetta, speaks in English, Yiddish, and transliteration; her rescued parrot friends speak in English, Spanish, and phonic pronunciation.

This charming story is the kind of multicultural book our libraries need: rich in humor, void of didactics, yet adding up to a warm allegory of interdependent community life. The birds live and act as animals, not people. Although they sport ethnic identity, they do not practice religion. The wonderful art provides Yetta with her spunky personality as it succinctly delivers her harrowing city experiences and rejections, her bewilderment at the life of the parrots, and finally, her ability to adjust and become the storytelling leader. The author notes that his tale rests on real wild parrot colonies in Brooklyn and free-wandering chickens in other New York cities. Adults reading to their children will share the joy, and be piqued to read about California's Yiddish chicken ranchers in Kenneth Kann's oral history, *Comrades and Chicken Ranchers*. Pinkwater's superb storytelling, accomplished in few sentences, offers with humor life lessons in self-knowledge and self-worth. What a desirable commodity!

Ellen G. Cole, Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA

**Robinson, Sharon.** *Jackie's Gift: A True Story of Christmas, Hanukkah, and Jackie Robinson.* Illus. by E.B. Lewis. New York: Viking, 2010. 32 pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-0-670-01162-9. Reviewed from an uncorrected proof. Gr. 1-4.

When Jackie Robinson and his family move to Tilden Avenue in Brooklyn, many of the neighbors are not pleased to have Blacks living on their block. Steve Satlow is thrilled. It is 1948, and he is a Brooklyn Dodgers fan. As the December holidays approach, Steve helps the Robinsons decorate their huge Christmas tree.

Jackie asks Steve about his family's tree, and Steve tells him that they don't have one. Wanting to be repay the kindness of his neighbors, Jackie takes one to their house, not realizing that the Satlows don't celebrate Christmas. The Satlows are perplexed. Should they keep the tree because it was a gift or get rid of it because relatives are coming for Hanukkah?

When the Robinsons come over with decorations, both families have a good laugh, and the Satlows decide to keep the tree. Based on a *faux pas* by the author's father, the book illustrates the melting pot that is America, with an African-American author and artist creating a book with Jewish content about Jackie Robinson. One page sums up the Satlows's attitude by explaining that their grandparents had left Russia because of the treatment they received as Jews, and that they would not discriminate against someone because he was Black. The final page shows a lit menorah on the mantel with a Christmas tree nearby. Lewis's colorful illustrations capture the era and the emotions of the families. Similar to *Testing the Ice* (Scholastic, 2009) in showing Jackie Robinson as a kind, good-natured family man, it will fit on the shelf with the growing number of books of "biographical fiction"—stories based on a true incident in a famous person's life. The book is recommended for all libraries.

Kathe Pinchuck, Clifton, NJ

**Stampler, Ann Redisch.** *The Rooster Prince of Breslov*. Illus. by Eugene Yelchin. New York: Clarion, 2010. 32 pp. \$16.00. ISBN: 978-0-618-98974-4. Gr. K-3.

In the three Jewish folktales that Ann Redisch Stampler has retold for children, she has revealed a blend of wit and psychological insight that, with the lightest of touches, reveals the stories' meaning and their application to the difficult process of growing up. Her writing is so deft that the rather profound themes of the stories are never told but always shown, a fundamental mark of good writing. *The Rooster Prince of Breslov*, in some versions called *The Turkey Prince*, is one of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov's tales. It can be found in many collections as well as in at least two individual illustrated versions. It is usually interpreted to mean that in order to be successful, a teacher must approach students at their own level, just as the old man in the story pretends to the confused young prince that he too is a fowl. In Stampler's version, the thematic focus is on the child who, through gentle teaching, is able to acquire empathy for others or, as the author puts it in a note, "to become a man by developing rachmanis, or true compassion, and practicing mitzvot, or good deeds."

The central task of childhood is to grow beyond the self, beyond infantile egocentricity. Stampler's version of the rooster prince story recognizes this and suggests a Jewish model of how this goal may be achieved. She tells the story of an alienated child whose sense of self has been impeded by over-indulgent parents. Eugene Yelchin's illustrations express the psychological depths of the story through images that are more archetypal than realistic. All of the human characters are comical looking and slightly distorted, shown from odd angles and perspectives. The skinny, red-headed turkey prince and the grizzled old man who convinces him to return to humankind are usually naked, but artfully posed by the illustrator to preserve modesty. Many of the double-page spreads resemble stage sets, reflecting Yelchin's work in the theater. Through its harmony of words and illustra-

tions, this version of an oft-told tale is strikingly original. Highly recommended.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

## BIBLE

**Alexander, Cecil F.** *All Things Bright and Beautiful*. Illus. by Ashley Bryan. New York: Atheneum, 2010. 40 pp. \$16.99. ISBN 978-1-4169-8939-4. Ages 3-5.

Here is a veritable work of art, filled with illustrations that are joyful, colorful, multicultural, and full of life, depicting aspects of the Creation. The author has created cut-paper collages for each page, representing people, nature, and animals of the sea, land, and sky. The illustrations include rainbows, sunset, wind, undersea life, and mountains. The collages were created with the illustrator's mother's sewing and embroidery scissors, which are reproduced on the endpapers. The letters on the beautiful cover are raised, making them jump out at the reader. Musical notation follows the text; an adult following the score can sing with a young child. Nothing in the text is incompatible with the Jewish view of God, but the reader must be aware that the words are those of a Christian hymn, written by a nineteenth-century Irish poet. That fact may disqualify this lovely book for purchase by some Jewish libraries.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

**Chayen, Edna.** *A Green Fantasy: Ruthie Discovers the Secret to Noah's Ecosystem*. Jerusalem: Mazo, 2010. 183 pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-965-7344-64-4. Pbk. Gr. 4-6.

An unusual concept powers this biblically-themed fantasy. Ruthie, who is ten, has chosen to do her summer vacation project on the topic of Noah's Ark. As always, she consults with her twelve-year-old brother, Dan, and they end up working together. The two are shocked at their discoveries, among them that the biblical ark was huge (bigger than a football field), that it was totally covered in pitch, and that it was a veritable ecosystem for cold- and warm-climate animals. Many of Ruthie's ideas for the project come to her in dreams, in which she hears and interacts with Noah and his three sons. Her imaginative dreams help Ruthie clarify her ideas but they also cause her restless nights.

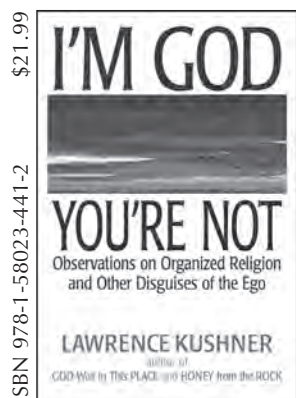
Though the depth of information about the habits of animals on the ark and the ecosystem created by Noah is remarkable, the writing is didactic and a bit dull. The fantastical aspect of the story doesn't ring true. The novel may be of interest to readers steeped in engineering or fascinated by animal ecology. It is recommended as an additional purchase.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

**Gadot, A.S.** *Tower of Babel*. Illus. by Cecilia Rebora. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 32 pp. \$7.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-9917-3. Kdg-3.

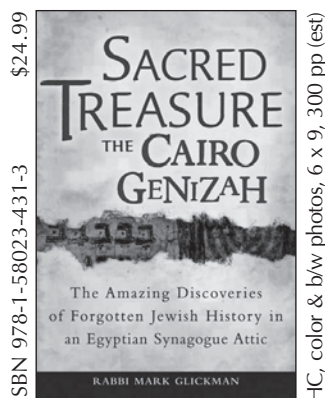
This adaptation of the biblical story from Genesis takes many liberties in its attempts to be humorous. The people of the Land of Shinar hang out at cafes and order cappuccinos. They consider starting a band and going on tour, but there is no one else in the world to hear them play. They think about designing the Internet, but the computer has not been invented yet. So instead they

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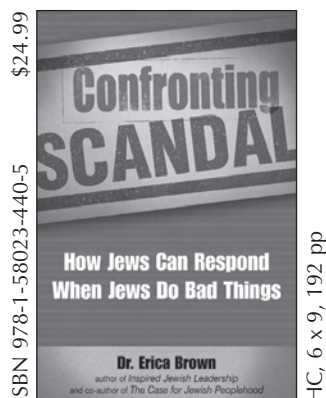
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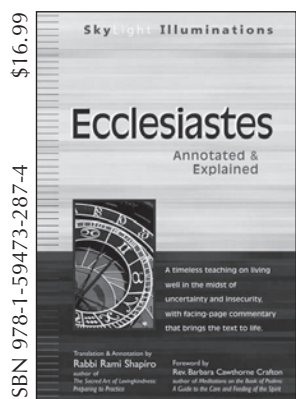
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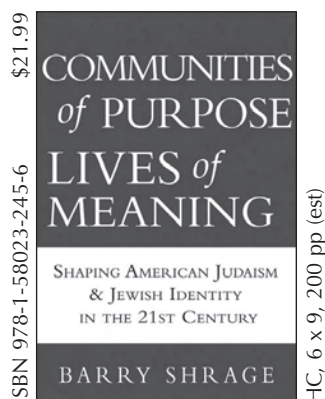
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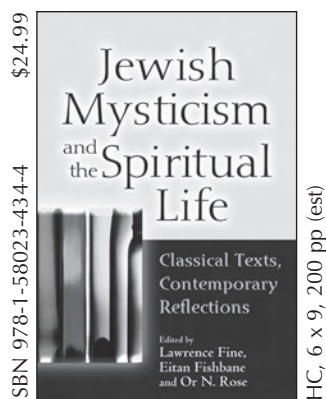
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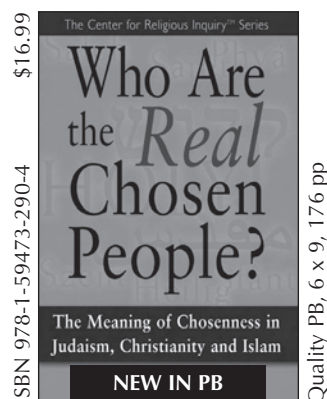
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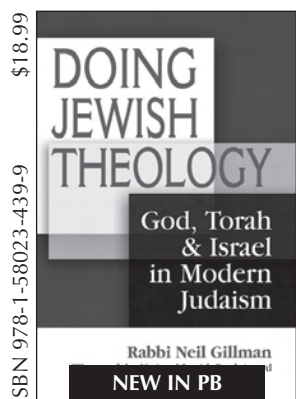
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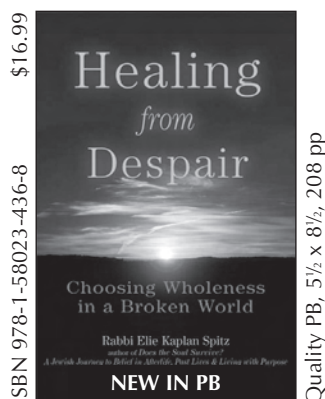
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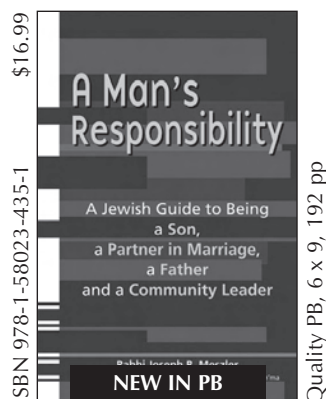
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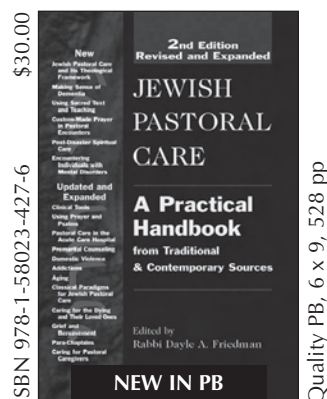
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build a tower that reaches towards the heavens. When they build the fiftieth floor, they form a conga line. After the hundredth floor, they exclaim, "How close we are to heaven. We will rule the earth and the sky!" Just then, the sky opens up and a storm breaks. The aftermath of the storm leaves the people speaking different languages. Since they can no longer communicate with one another, they move to different lands.

Some of the attempts at humor are geared to adults and children will not comprehend them. They also detract from the story. There is no mention of God punishing the people for trying to build something greater than Him/Herself, but the text still conveys the message. The characters are illustrated to look like cut-out figures with googly eyes. They complement the comical text. This book is recommended for Judaic libraries.

*Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH*

**Jules, Jacqueline. *Miriam in the Desert*. Illus. by Natascia Ugliano. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 32 pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-4494-0. Reviewed from an ARC. Kdg-3.**

A Bible legend comes to life in Jacqueline Jules's lovely tale of Miriam, sister of Moses and wise woman of her people. Miriam is the loving grandmother of Bezalel, who tells the story. As the Israelites trek (and complain) through the wilderness, Bezalel draws pictures in the sand illustrating miracles such as manna and Miriam's well. At the climax of the story, Bezalel's great-uncle, Moses, climbs the mountain to receive God's laws. Where will these Ten Commandments be kept? In a place that is "safe and beautiful." Bezalel has been chosen to craft this Holy Ark.

Jules retells this legend about Miriam and Bezalel in poetic and evocative language. Young children will be eager to join in the refrain: "Miracles, miracles / praise God's might! / We see miracles / day and night." In the author's note, Jules cites the sources she used, including books by Steinsaltz, Telushkin, Frankel, and Ginzberg. Natascia Ugliano's bright illustrations in pencil and pastels complement the story and give movement and expression to the Israelites. Why, even the birds and animals have character! Ugliano has illustrated four of Jules's books, a collaboration that this reviewer hopes will continue. Recommended for school and synagogue libraries.

*Anne Dublin, Toronto, Canada*

## BIOGRAPHY

**Kesselring, Susan. *Albert Einstein*. Basic Biographies Series. Mankato, MN: Child's World, 2010. 24 pp. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-1-60253-338-7. Preschool-Gr. 1.**

It is difficult to write a picture book about a man as complex as Einstein but Child's World has condensed the stories of some of the world's great figures into 24-page narratives. Susan Kesselring's biography contains many of the key elements in the physicist's life. It includes his birth "on March 14, 1879." It notes that "he liked thinking and learning on his own much better" than learning in school. The text and its accompanying captioned photographs indicate how powerful his ideas were, and how much they have influenced our lives today. The book notes that Einstein moved to the U.S. and became a citizen. There is even a photo of him on his sailboat—a passion of his for many years.

This small volume for preschool-aged children contains a wealth of factual material. There is no mention of Einstein's Jewish background, but he himself had downplayed it throughout much of his life. Child's World has produced a worthwhile book for the very young about this extraordinary man.

*Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Rubinstein, Robert. *Zishe the Strongman*. Illus. by Woody Miller. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 32 pp. \$17.95 (hc), \$7.95 (pbk), \$13.46 (eBook). ISBN: 978-0-7613-3958-8 (hc); 978-0-7613-3960-1 (pbk); 978-0-7613-6237-1 (eBook). Ages 5-9.**

*Zishe the Strongman* is based on the true story of Siegmund Breitbart, aka "Zishe of Lodz," an early twentieth-century man who performed in circuses around the world. A blacksmith's son, Zishe would entertain the village children with extraordinary feats of strength. Eventually, he was invited to showcase his strength in performances throughout Europe and ultimately, in America. Rubinstein's story opens with the master of ceremonies' call through a bullhorn, gathering people to witness Zishe's latest, greatest feat to be performed on Fifth Avenue. The reader is then transported back to Zishe's Polish village to understand his poor Jewish beginnings and how he has come to this moment in New York. Zishe's physical strength is contrasted with a gentleness that manifests in a love for small animals and for music. No matter how incredible were his feats or how famous he became, wherever he traveled he sought out a connection with the Jewish community, and in particular with Jewish children. The story ends back on Fifth Avenue with a dramatic, suspense-filled description of Zishe's performance, for which he is crowned "The Iron King." The last page of the book provides a brief biography of Siegmund Breitbart.

Rubinstein's descriptions of Zishe's feats of strength are exciting and captivating. In contrast, the book's Jewish content falls flat. The real Zishe, according to Rubinstein's biography, believed that Jews should be strong, and he hoped the members of his Jewish sports group would ultimately liberate the land of Israel. Unfortunately, this translates into a few token sentences about visiting fellow Jews throughout his travels and a prosaic comparison to Samson. Simple, beautifully colored illustrations enrich the text. The book is recommended for school libraries.

*Deborah Abecassis, Montreal, Canada*

## FICTION

**Bick, Ilsa J. *Draw the Dark*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda, 2010. 344 pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-5686-8. Gr. 8-12.**

The little town of Winter, Wisconsin has many secrets. A depressed and lonely teenager named Christian is poised to reveal them through his "gift" of mental telepathy, episodes of sleepwalking, and a strange ability to draw both the past and the future. Christian's parents have disappeared—not died, but disappeared—and in his obsessive drawing of his mother, he is pulled into a morass of dark deeds, murder, and even anti-Semitism, all the stranger because there are no Jews in Winter. A court-ordered psychiatrist helps Christian as he contemplates suicide and wrestles with forces within himself that he doesn't understand. This noir novel of psychological torment and baf-

fling occult forces is an unusual one for Jewish teens and it takes a while for the rather overwhelming plot to reveal its Jewish content. But that content is central to the story's conflict and important to Christian's gradual mastery of himself. His character and many others are probingly developed and the setting, both contemporary and historical, is very strong. There were German prisoners of war held in the United States during World War II and the presence of some of them in Winter, encountered eerily in Christian's dreams and revealed more rationally through old newspaper reports, are the foundation of a suspenseful, concentration-demanding story with a hefty share of violence, obscenities, sex, and psychological anguish. What is the significance of the name "Christian"? That's for readers to decide.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

**Brill, Marlene Targ.** *Annie Shapiro and the Clothing Workers' Strike*. Illus. by Jamel Akib. History Speaks Series. Minneapolis: Lerner, 2011. 48 pp. \$27.93 (library-bound). ISBN: 978-1-58013-672-3. Gr. 3-5.

Seventeen-year-old Annie Shapiro, the main character in this illustrated piece of historical fiction, lives in Chicago in 1910 and helps her family by working in a factory, just as many immigrant girls of that period did. When she has had more than she can take of bad treatment at the Hart, Schaffner and Marx men's clothing factory, she walks out in protest and other workers follow her. A strike ensues and the United Garment Workers Union gets involved. In the end, a successful agreement is reached and the union honors Annie.

Although the role of Jews in the American labor movement is the subject of several books for young readers, in this particular story, based on a real person named Annie Shapiro, no Jewish values are called upon by Annie to deal with the conflict and she is not even identified as Jewish. The story is augmented with beautiful color illustrations that evoke the past and suggest that Annie and her family might be Jewish through the clothes they wear and Annie's father's beard. A reader's theater script of the story, included in the book, may be used to bring the story alive in classrooms. Clear directions for performing reader's theater, plus an author's note, a glossary, some further reading, Web sites to visit, and some tips to teachers are appended. A part of Lerner's History Speaks series, it is also available as an e-book.

Debbie Feder, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, Chicago, IL

**Hays, Peter and Beti Rozen.** *Two Continents, Four Generations: One Hundred Years, Two Stories*. Fort Lee, NJ: Sem Fronteiras Press, 2010. 183 pp. \$13.95. ISBN: 978-09642333-6-2. Gr. 4-7.

Louis is not interested in history at all, but a fifth-grade class project to write about his family history and immigration means he needs to learn about it anyway. His assignment spurs his mother to plan a family trip by cruise ship to Poland, so they can see where her family lived before they escaped, eventually settling in Brazil. Chapters about Louis's adventures are interspersed with chapters about his grandfather Lejzor as a child in Poland, Portugal, and Brazil.

The sections about Louis, a very secular Jewish boy, focus more on his adventures on the cruise ship than on his family, leaving the sections about Lejzor without the strong connection to the contemporary boy that the story is intended to establish. At

the same time, Lejzor's story is peopled with caricatures familiar to any reader of historical fiction about 20-century European Jews. The novel doesn't have a Jewish feel, especially when the narrator describes the big statue in the Rio de Janeiro harbor as "Jesus Christ." Lejzor and Tania, ostensibly from a Jewish area in Poland, immediately recognize the figure and worry about how they'll manage in a Catholic country. That Louis's parents would take him to Majdanek and only there explain that "the Nazis hated Jews" further strains credulity. Throughout the novel, unusual word choices and turns of phrase prevent the story from flowing smoothly. Not recommended.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

## FOLKLORE

**Sheinkin, Steve.** *Rabbi Harvey Vs. The Wisdom Kid: A Graphic Novel of Dueling Jewish Folktales in The Wild West*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2010. 135 pp. \$16.99. ISBN: 978-1-58023-422-1. Pbk. Gr. 3-7.

The curtain goes up on the first full-length Rabbi Harvey feature with a shot of a raging river, a man struggling to stay afloat, and one lonely word rising above: "Help!" This sounds like a job for... no, not Superman—Rabbi Harvey! That's right. Witty and wise Rabbi Harvey is back to save the day, and the town of Elk Spring, from the villainous misdeeds of "Bad Bubbe" Bloom, "Big Milt" Wasserman, and newcomer Rabbi "Wisdom Kid" Ruben. On the day of the annual Elk Spring Fair, Ruben, the son of Bad Bubbe, sets up his own "Stump the Rabbi" booth next to Harvey's, and tries to entice the town residents to seek him out for counsel. A duel of Talmudic teachings follows, and throughout the book the two rabbis will clash in their approaches to solving various problems. In the end, Elk Spring is big enough for only one rabbi. Readers of the previous two Rabbi Harvey books will be proud to see their hero use his brains to triumph over the inaptly-named "Wisdom Kid." Longer and more colorful than the first two volumes, the third Rabbi Harvey book is certain to whet fans' appetites for more of the same.

Wendy Wasman, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, OH

## HOLIDAYS

Reviewed below are five books in Crabtree's *Celebrations in My World Series*, written for children in grades 1-3. Each 32-page paperback costs \$8.95.

**Aloian, Molly.** *Hanukkah*, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-7787-4301-9.

**Aloian, Molly.** *Passover*, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-7787-4311-8.

**Miller, Reagan.** *Sukkot*, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7787-4784-0.

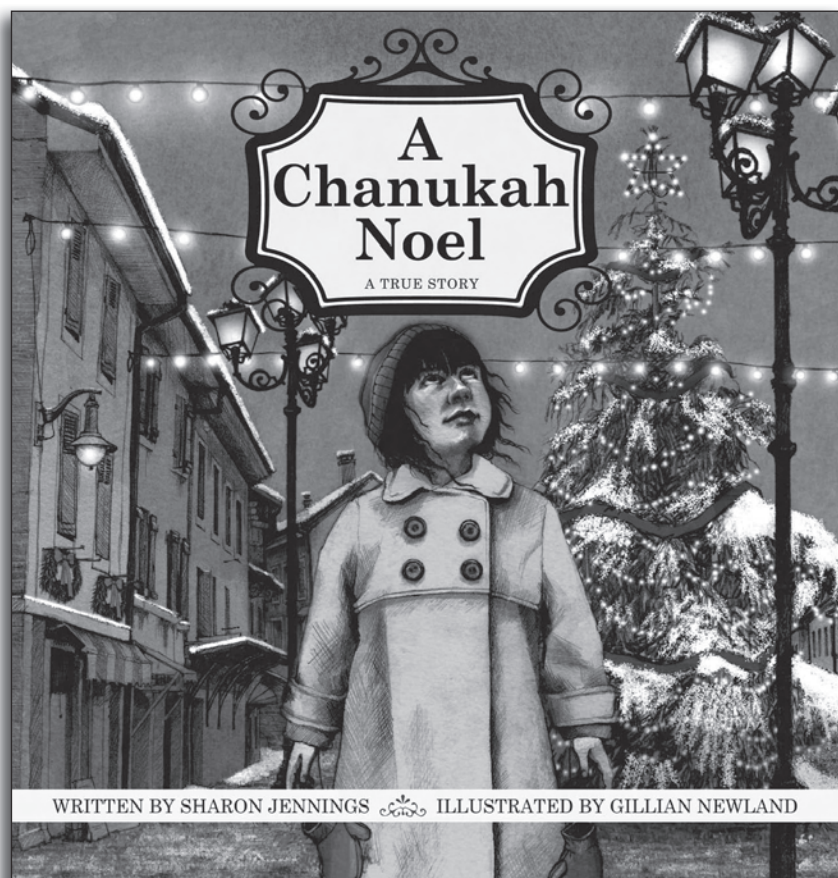
**Peppas, Lynn.** *Purim*, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7787-4782-6.

**Peppas, Lynn.** *Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7787-4775-8.

This series of books makes an admirable, yet flawed attempt to explain Jewish holidays to a general audience of young readers likely unfamiliar with Judaism. The books are formatted in a similar manner with simple prose, full-color photographs, and short chapters that cover each holiday's meaning, traditions,

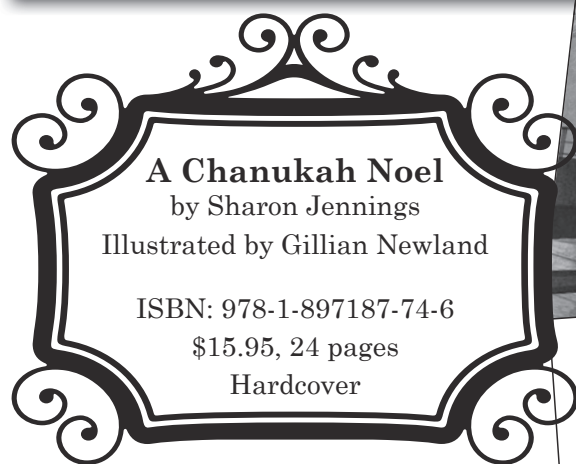


# A Christmas at Chanukah?



Charlotte and her family have just moved to a small town in France. There is a lot to get used to – a new language, new friends, a new school. Even the milk tastes different. As Christmas draws near, Charlotte is amazed to see the town transform itself. The streets are decorated, the shops are full of presents, and the smells of cinnamon and chocolate fill the air. Charlotte, who is Jewish, feels left out.

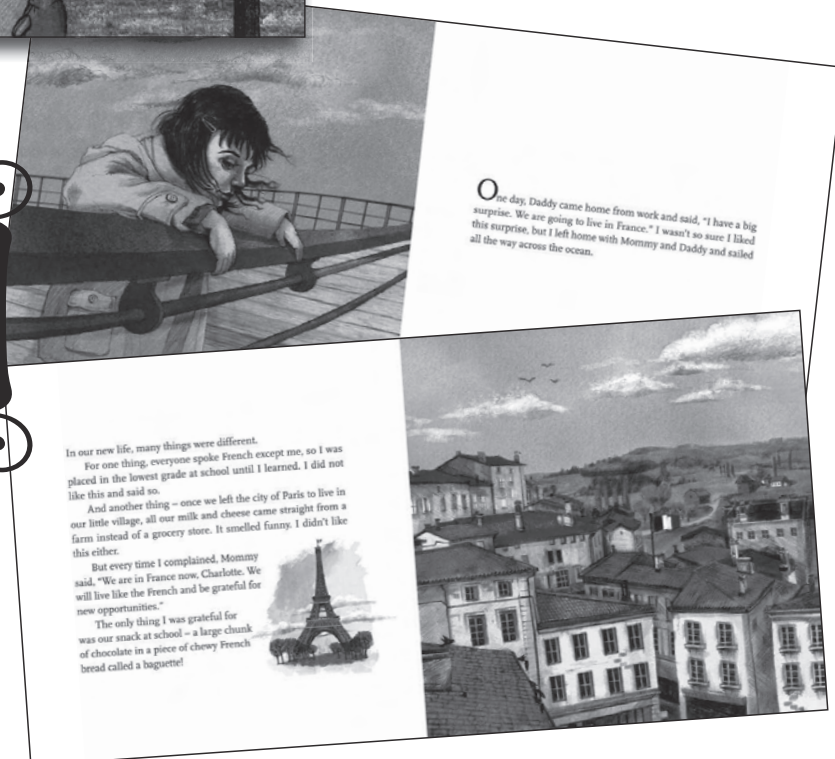
With her imagination and the help of her family, Charlotte finds a way to bring the spirit of Chanukah and Christmas together by helping a Christian friend whose family is too poor to have a celebration of their own.



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One day, Daddy came home from work and said, "I have a big surprise. We are going to live in France." I wasn't so sure I liked all the way across the ocean.

In our new life, many things were different. For one thing, everyone spoke French except me, so I was placed in the lowest grade at school until I learned. I did not like this and said so.

And another thing – once we left the city of Paris to live in our little village, all our milk and cheese came straight from a farm instead of a grocery store. It smelled funny. I didn't like this either.

But every time I complained, Mommy said, "We are in France now, Charlotte. We will live like the French and be grateful for new opportunities."

The only thing I was grateful for was our snack at school – a large chunk of chocolate in a piece of chewy French bread called a baguette!





symbols, prayers, and foods. Each book emphasizes how families share in the holiday, worship together, and give to charity. Generally, the books give an adequate overview of each holiday, but a handful of inaccuracies, awkward writing, lack of careful editing, and generalizations that beg for further explanation mar the final result. For example, the Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur book contains the statement, "People also eat fish heads and animal tongues during Rosh Hashanah." No explanation is given about the symbolic nature of these foods, leaving the novice reader with the notion that Jews have unusual culinary inclinations. In the same book, an illustration caption erroneously reads, "Yom Kippur celebrates the story of God giving Moses the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai to give to the people."

Even the youngest readers will find the text, at times, overly simplistic and painfully obvious. The Purim book explains sunset as "the time of day when the sun begins to go down in the sky" and states that "Jewish people are often called Jews." An instance of poor editing can be found in the Hanukkah book, in which a stock photo of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the holiest Christian site in the world, accompanies text about the rededication of the Temple. Odd words are chosen for the glossaries. Instead of focusing on recapping and reinforcing Jewish terms and concepts, the glossaries include words such as "ancestors," "ancient," "community," "engraved," and "balconies." Enough red flags dot these books to make them unacceptable for any Judaic library. Not recommended.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

**Balsley, Tilda. *Maccabee! The Story of Hanukkah*. Illus. by David Harrington. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 32 pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-4507-7. Preschool-Gr. 2.**

Author Tilda Balsley and illustrator David Harrington's new picture book uses a simple and engaging rhyme scheme and bright colors to take us back to the days of the Second Temple, when King Antiochus ordered the Jews to assimilate into Greek society. The story is told as a serious history lesson for preschool children and early readers. The text includes the names of some of Mattathias' sons, and acknowledges the war against the Greeks, including scary-looking elephants. The story shows Jews recovering Jerusalem, rebuilding the Temple, and lighting the menorah that burned for eight days. In an epilogue, a modern family sits around the table with Judah Maccabee, celebrating the holiday with latkes and applesauce. A phrase repeated throughout the book is "Sometimes it only takes a few / who know what's right, and do it, too." The illustrations are boldly colored and the Jewish heroes are square-jawed and powerful-looking. While this may not be a picture book for the ages, it takes the history of the holiday seriously and reinforces a message of belief that is frequently lost in presents and silliness.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

**Cohen, Deborah Bodin. *Engineer Ari and the Sukkah Express*. Illus. by Shahar Kober. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 32 pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-5126-9. Reviewed from ARC. Gr. K-2.**

The cute, chipper trio of engineers created by author Cohen and artist Kober return in a timely sequel. Engineer Ari builds a sukkah with his two railroad cohorts (one a woman), thanks to materials provided by friends along his Jaffa-to-Jerusalem

train route. When he feels sad that these distant, helpful folk will not see his holiday booth, his fellow engineers surprise him by dismantling the sukkah from his backyard, rebuilding it on his train, and providing a view to all along the tracks. The sweet tale rests on the historical truth of the first 1892 Israeli train. It teaches the components of a sukkah. In the endnote, the reader discovers that the friends who supply Ari are named in Hebrew for the three different branches in the lulav. Counting the number of times each person's name appears, reveals how many of each branch is bundled in the lulav. The sequel does not have the strong emotional pull of the first picture book, *Engineer Ari and the Rosh Hashanah Ride*. Here, the Sukkot holiday lesson dominates the soon-solved problem about not sharing with friends. Despite being didactic, this is a strongly-illustrated volume; Ari and his fellows are now recognizable friends to targeted readers. The charm of the art, Israeli setting, warm characters, and kind story frame recommend this book.

Ellen G. Cole, Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA

**Jules, Jacqueline. *Going on a Hametz Hunt*. Illus. by Rick Brown. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 12 pp. \$5.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-5124-5. Board book. Ages 1-4.**

Award-winning author Jacqueline Jules has created a wonderful little board book for young toddlers about the preparations for Passover. Counting and rhyming are important elements of the story. Predictable language patterns along with colorful illustrations that complement the text contribute to the success of *Going on a Hametz Hunt*. The story follows a brother and sister as they search their house for leftover crumbs, or hametz, before the start of the Passover holiday. The siblings search various places in the house, for example, under the sink, on the couch, and behind the door. The young reader participates in the story by counting the crumbs on each page. This joyful book is recommended for preschool libraries as well as for the homes of observant toddlers.

Lisa Katz, Greenbrae, CA

**Jules, Jacqueline. *Happy Hanukkah Lights*. Illus. by Michelle Shapiro. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 12 pp. \$5.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-5120-7. Board book. Ages 1-4.**

*Happy Hanukkah Lights*, another board book by Jacqueline Jules, is about the celebration of Hanukkah. This simple story shows the importance of singing Hanukkah songs, eating latkes, spinning dreidels, and lighting the menorah each night. The reader participates in the story by counting the candles on the menorah. The author uses rhymes in short, simple sentences. The colorful, whimsical illustrations have an eye for detail and help make the story flow smoothly. An optional purchase.

Lisa Katz, Greenbrae, CA

**Rouss, Sylvia A. *Sammy Spider's First Simhat Torah*. Illus. by Katherine Janus Kahn. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2010. 32 pp. \$16.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-3965-6. Reviewed from an ARC. Preschool-Gr. 2.**

In this latest installment of the popular Sammy Spider series, the curious arachnid, along with his human counterpart, Josh, learn about Simhat Torah. Both discover how on this holiday the yearly cycle of reading the entire Torah, "the Jewish people's

favorite story," is completed and begun again. It is compared to Josh's imploring his parents to read to him once again his favorite book about creation. The inquisitive spider manages to hitch a ride to the evening synagogue services stuck to Josh's candied apple. Once there, Sammy joins in the celebration thanking God for the gift of the Torah.

Devoted fans will recognize the familiar format of large text coupled with bright collage illustrations, as well as Sammy's mother's familiar rejoinder to her son's questions: "Silly little Sammy. Spiders don't... Spiders spin webs." A recipe for candy apples follows the story. Once again, the talented team of Rouss and Kahn create a magical book any child will want to read again and again and again.

Allison Marks, Temple Israel Library, Akron, OH

**Schnur, Susan, and Anna Schnur-Fishman. *Tashlich at Turtle Rock*. Illus. by Alex Steele-Morgan. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 32 pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-7613-4509-1. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 1-3.**

Another year, another Tashlich tale, but not, alas, another Sydney Taylor winner. This latest picture book helps fill a void on our library shelves, but it does not do it as well as April Wayland's *New Year at the Pier*. A family of four is featured in *Tashlich at Turtle Rock*. At the first spot on their traditional High Holy Day walk in the woods, each person recalls something good from the past year by writing about it with a stone, which dad washes away before they move on; at the next spot they recount a sin they wish to repair, then toss it into the stream; at the third stop they think of a promise for the New Year; at the last stop they eat apples and honey, then recite a wonderful prayer the mom wrote: really nice, really sweet, but well, really real? The Schnurs' story reveals an idealized family in an idyllic setting celebrating the holiday isolated from others. While it is not a bad idea to share a solo family custom, this is not the reality most children recognize as Rosh Hashanah afternoon. The clunky text is wordy and too mature for targeted readers. The stiff, old-fashioned art arrives in a calm palate of earthy fall colors, which clash with the pink clothing. The uber-perfect family does the picture-perfect thing, religiously and environmentally, in a treacley sell of communing with nature at the New Year. Saccharine aside, this useful volume addresses a holiday represented by too few books.

Ellen G. Cole, Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA

## HOLOCAUST

**Chapman, Fern Schumer. *Is It Night or Day?* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010. 224 pp. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-0-374-17744-7. Reviewed from an ARC. Gr. 5-9.**

While the history of England's Kindertransport is widely publicized, we do not know a lot about the role the United States played in saving the Holocaust's youngest victims. The American rescue operation known as "One Thousand Children" sought to place child refugees from Nazi-dominated Europe with foster families in the U.S. Lutherans, Quakers, and Jews organized the rescue mission, which took place from 1934 to 1945. In all, 1,200 children were saved. Based on true events, *Is It Night or Day?* is about Edith Westerfield's journey as a young child flee-

ing Germany in 1938. Chapman vividly captures her mother's ordeal as Edith is torn from her family and all she knows. Then she must endure a long ocean journey to freedom. Aboard the ship bound for America, we meet other children, younger and older, who help each other survive the many boring days at sea. Crowded conditions on the ship make the journey almost unbearable, but among the other young refugees, Edith finds friendship and hope.

The reader easily empathizes with twelve-year-old Edith, who understands the seriousness of the Nazi threat, but still clings to her youthful fantasies. When she arrives in the U.S., Edith must find her way to Chicago even though she speaks very little English. When she reaches Chicago, she is in for a rude shock. Her uncle Jacob is sympathetic but her aunt is harsh and cruel. Edith must endure disappointment after disappointment. She soon discovers that one of her best friends from the ship is ashamed to associate with her. Finally, she learns that her mother, father, and grandmother have died in a concentration camp. Amazingly, a fascination with the American game of baseball and her favorite player, Hank Greenberg, helps Edith to adapt, learn to love her new home, and most important, to love life. *Is It Night or Day?* is recommended for public libraries, day schools, and synagogues.

Tammy Gerson, Congregation Children of Israel, Athens, GA

**Dogar, Sharon. *Annexed*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2010. 333 pp. \$17.00. ISBN: 978-0-547-50195-6. Reviewed from an ARC. Ages 13-18.**

A powerful coming-of-age novel imagines the events of Anne Frank's diary through the eyes of Peter Van Pels, one of her companions in the hidden annex. Anne's diary ends on August 4, 1944, when they are taken away, but Peter's continues beyond their capture and into the camps. Peter is in the sick bay at Mauthausen, having survived the Nazi occupation of Holland, five months in Auschwitz, and a forced march. Peter describes the details of daily life in the secret annex. He is a talented artist, but finds his academic studies with his and Anne's parents extremely difficult. In the annex, he questions everything, including his Jewishness, for he is unable to fathom why the Jews are being persecuted. The reader is allowed to see all his uncertainties with life in general, and his relationship with Anne in particular. Together he and Anne try to make sense of what's happening in the world around them. They are always cold and always hungry, and are terrified by any unusual noises or occurrences. On the night of the burglary in the office below, the terror of the occupants of the annex is palpable. Peter details his dreams and nightmares during the time in hiding.

Peter's story is told in diary format, with dated entries; many of the chapters end with italicized, extremely poignant and depressed thoughts that swirl through Peter's head as he fights to survive. By this time, he is aware of the fate of many of the annex's occupants. This well-written and gripping teen novel is about family and adolescence, but overwhelmingly, it is a very painful story of the Holocaust, particularly in Peter's descriptions of the day-to-day life in the camps. This may not be a good purchase for Orthodox libraries because of many discussions of sexuality. Recommended.

Shelly Feit, Moriah School Library, Englewood, NJ

### **Series: True Stories of Teens in the Holocaust**

In 2010, Enslow Publishers introduced a six-book series about the different aspects of teenage life and heroism during the Holocaust. Margaret Shannon, a senior research historian with Washington Historical Research, conducted the research, culling primary data from published memoirs and other sources. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives of survivor testimony, as well as archival photographs, provide the bulk of the information in the books. Each book averages seven chapters and contains a concise index, excellent Internet resources, a list for further reading, which includes books about the reading level of the text, a short glossary, and a timeline of events pertinent to the subject of the book. Chapter notes appear at the end of each book.

Generally, this is a solid series with a lot of eyewitness accounts, so there are fewer concrete facts and more personal perspectives than in other historical series. Many of the pictures and artifacts are shown as examples of what is being described in the text. Often the authentic voice of a survivor is in fractured English, which may pose a challenge to some readers. Some of the books contain graphic photographs and descriptions of Nazi atrocities. Otherwise, the set is a worthy addition to all libraries, particularly Holocaust and school libraries, where readers can use them for school projects and background information. Each of the 128-page books is intended for readers aged 14 and up, and is priced at \$31.93.

**Altman, Linda Jacobs. *Escape—Teens on the Run: Primary Sources from the Holocaust*. ISBN: 978-0-7660-3270-5.**

Teens from Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Lithuania describe how they fled, and the book includes information about the Kindertransport and the St. Louis. Most attributed their survival to luck and quick decisions. Some of the stories appear in other volumes. The text fails to mention that those who wanted to leave Germany would have to abandon all their assets, or that Sugihara was punished for his role in helping Jews escape Lithuania.

**Altman, Linda Jacobs. *Hidden Teens, Hidden Lives: Primary Sources from the Holocaust*. ISBN: 978-0-7660-3271-2.**

Anne Frank provides the context, as readers learn the challenges of strategic timing in fleeing and/or hiding, of making arrangements and finding shelter, of the fear of being caught. The text discusses different hiding places, using false identities, and dealing with Gentile protectors.

**Altman, Linda Jacobs. *Shattered Youth in Nazi Germany: Primary Sources from the Holocaust*. ISBN: 978-0-7660-3268-2.**

Many teen experiences are enumerated. Starting with seventeen-year-old Herschel Grynszpan, who shot a German diplomat because he was distraught that his family was deported from Germany to Poland, the book then chronicles how the Nazi movement attracted young people with its uniforms and marching, how Jews and non-Aryans were treated at school (and eventually expelled), and the peer pressure in the Hitler Youth Movement. If not purchasing the entire series, this volume would be optional because most of the information is contained in the other books.

**Byers, Ann. *Courageous Teen Resisters: Primary Sources from the Holocaust*. ISBN: 978-0-7660-3269-9.**

Starting with the pre-World War II environment of violence and intimidation, Byers chronicles the various ways in which teens resisted. She begins with a discussion of the rebel groups in Germany—the Edelweiss Pirates, Baum Group, and White Rose—and then describes other groups in Western Europe and the tactics they used, including rescue and sabotage. There is a chapter about “Fighting Back in the Ghettos,” and one on “Partisan Groups in the Forest.” Byers also points out quiet resistance and actions to bolster one another’s spirit and hope.

**Byers, Ann. *Trapped—Youth in the Nazi Ghettos: Primary Sources from the Holocaust*. ISBN: 978-0-7660-3272-9.**

Eight chapters detail life in the ghettos—their establishment, the harsh conditions, and their liquidation. One chapter discusses how people managed to feed the body, often smuggling or selling valuables. Another discusses feeding the spirit, describing different cultural activities, including concerts and plays.

**Byers, Ann. *Youth Destroyed—The Nazi Camps: Primary Sources from the Holocaust*. ISBN: 978-0-7660-3273-6.**

In starting with an account of Kristallnacht, the author sets the stage for the origins of concentration camps, the establishment of labor camps, prison camps, and ultimately death camps. There are very graphic descriptions of the brutal treatment people received, with a whole chapter about Auschwitz. The final chapter discusses finding family, displaced persons (DP) camps, and the memories that haunt many survivors.

*Kathe Pinchuck, Clifton, NJ*

**Schloss, Eva, with Evelyn Julia Kent. *Eva’s Story: A Survivor’s Tale by the Stepsister of Anne Frank*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010. 226 pp. \$14.99. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6495-6. Pbk. Gr. 7–Adult.**

First published in 1988, *Eva’s Story* tells the story of Eva Geiringer-Schloss and her Jewish family during the traumatic years from 1938 to 1945. Pappy Erich, Mutti Fritz, Brother Heinz and Eva flee from Vienna and immigrate to Holland, but end up imprisoned in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Only Eva and Fritz survive to memorialize, many years later, the personal Holocaust horrors they and their loved ones endured. This second edition concludes with a 2009 interview with the elderly Eva Schloss. The book has three main parts: From Vienna to Amsterdam, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Journey through Russia. It includes a family tree, family photos, and a route map. The epilogue and the postscript by Fritz Geiringer-Frank summarize the family years up to 1988.

Eva shares a candid description of the life of a teenage girl under Nazi rule. There is neither anger nor self pity; rather, the narrative shows the triumph of the human spirit over evil. With the support of family and friends, survivors were able to go on living as productive human beings. Eva is a worthy role model, who inspires the reader to be hopeful about the future even when conditions are dismal. *Eva’s Story* is the story of Anne Frank after her diary ended. It should stand next to *The Diary of Anne Frank* in Jewish day school, synagogue, and public libraries.

*Nira Wolfe, Highland Park, IL*



## ISRAEL

**Marx, Trish.** *Sharing Our Homeland: Palestinian and Jewish Children at Summer Peace Camp. Photographs by Cindy Karp.* New York: Lee and Low, 2010. 48 pp. \$19.95. ISBN: 978-1-58430-260-5. Gr. 3-7.

In Hebrew, its name is Kaytanat HaShalom; in Arabic, Mukhayam Asalam; in English, Menashe Summer Peace Camp. It is located on the grounds of Givat Haviva, an Israeli organization that works toward Jewish-Arab peace. Here, Israeli Jewish children and Israeli Arab children share a typical camping experience. Campers and camp activities are shown in large, color photographs that reflect the text's detailed account of where the campers come from, what they do at camp, and how their experiences playing, cooperating, and having fun together may help to create a peaceful future for their shared homeland. The focus is on an Israeli boy named Yuval and an Arab girl named Alya, who are shown not only at camp but at home with their families. Historical background information about the Holy Land is generally accurate except for a misleading statement about the 1947 plan to create a Jewish state and a Palestinian state. In explaining why the Arabs rejected this plan, the author states, "They did not want to give up their land." Appended material includes a map, an author's note, lists of recommended books (several of which are biased against Israel) and Web sites, pronunciation guide and glossary, and both primary and secondary sources used by the author in her research. Similar in subject, point of view and photographic format to *Neve Shalom, Wahat al Salam: Oasis of Peace* by Dolphin (Scholastic, 1993), this hopeful book is recommended despite its relatively minor flaws.

Linda R. Silver, Cleveland, OH

**Robson, David.** *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. Lucent Books World History Series.* Detroit: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2010. 96 pp. \$33.45. ISBN: 978-1-42050-239-8. Gr. 7-12.

The Lucent Books World History series promises to "rely on sound research and verifiable evidence... give students a clear sense of time, place, and chronology through maps and timelines as well as text... and include a wide range of authoritative perspectives that demonstrate the complexity of historical interpretation" (foreword, p. 5). The 84 pages of text outlining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict uphold this promise by providing an informative, well-written, and balanced account coupled with interesting sidebars and relevant photographs and illustrations. Beginning with the Ottoman Empire, the *haskalah* in Europe, the growth of Zionism, the British mandate, and World War II, and continuing with Israel's declaration of independence, the Six-Day War, the Yom Kippur War, Camp David Accords, the Oslo Peace Process, and the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the volume concludes with Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, the war with Hezbollah, and the return of Netanyahu to the prime minister's office. Robson also covers the rise of Nasser, Pan-Arabism, the formation of Fatah and the PLO, Black September, the first and second Intifadas, the reign of Arafat, and the appointment of Mahmoud Abbas.

Two minor criticisms should be pointed out. When discussing the massacre in the mosque at the Cave of the Patriarchs, the author describes Baruch Goldstein as holding "extremely con-

servative views" (p. 54); when analyzing extremist rabbi Yitzhak Ginzburg's justification of the massacre, he asserts, "Ginzburg's views are not unique among Conservative Jews" (p. 57). Robson also describes settlements like Kiryat Arba as "conservative" (p. 60). This use of the word "conservative" rather than "right-wing" or "extremist" is misleading and confusing. Also, when explaining the history of the Jews in the land of Israel, B.C. and B.C.E are used inconsistently. Detailed endnotes, a glossary, index, and list of books, articles, and Web sites for further study, round out this excellent resource.

Rachel Kamin, North Suburban Synagogue Beth El,  
Highland Park, IL

## JUDAISM

**Elissa, Barbara.** *The Remarkable Journey of Josh's Kippa. Illus. by Farida Zaman.* Minneapolis: Kar-Ben, 2010. 32 pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 978-0-8225-9911-1. Kdg-Gr. 2.

A kippah from Joshua Jacobs's bar mitzvah in Los Angeles travels the globe as children forget to remove it when they fly to their home countries. Each child wears the kippah as he celebrates a Jewish holiday. The story provides an overview of holidays throughout the Jewish calendar year, however it is contrived and far-fetched. The kippah seems to miraculously disappear and the text does not flow well. The phrase leading to the kippah's next destination, "When he flew home to... (child's country), Josh's kippah flew with him," feels forced and choppy. Today, children generally do not wear kippot that they find for fear of head lice. The format of the book is cartoon-like. The text is offset in caption boxes and the font would be difficult for new readers to decipher. The illustrations are amusing and descriptive of the holidays. A glossary is provided. The book is recommended for Jewish libraries as an additional purchase.

Heather Lenson, Jewish Education Center, Cleveland, OH

**Lehmann, Marcus.** *Faith and Courage. Transl. from the German by Rabbi Joseph Teomim.* Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 2009. 198 pp. \$17.99. ISBN: 978-1-59826-279-7. Ages 12 and up.

This volume contains *Faith and Courage*, a novella, as well as two short stories, "Del Monte" and "The Pocketknife." *Faith and Courage* presents the story of Rabbi Shabbathai Cohen, known as the Shach, and his daughter Esther, whose habit of standing up for their people bears striking similarity to the biblical book of Esther. It is a compelling tale that will draw the reader into the amazing events of their lives. Their faith and piety in the face of almost unimaginable difficulties are inspirations to readers young and not so young. The short stories—one about kidnapping and mistaken identity, and the other about friendship and repaying debts—also model religious faith and the importance of behaving properly toward other people.

The language feels old (the title first appeared in 1867), but in a charming way that does not detract from the narrative; in fact, it adds a fairy-tale quality to the writing. Readers who are already familiar with Jewish texts and the basic precepts of Judaism will understand the stories more readily than others, though Lehmann provides enough explanation for a determined novice to figure out what's going on. Highly recommended for

libraries serving Orthodox patrons and those interested in Jewish history.

Marci Lavine Bloch, Silver Spring, MD

## PICTURE BOOKS

**Lakritz, Deborah.** *Say Hello, Lilly.* Illus. by Martha Avilés. Minneapolis: Kar-Ben/Lerner, 2010. 32 pp. \$17.95 (hardcover), \$7.95 (paperback), \$13.46 (E-book). ISBN: 978-0-7613-4511-4 (hc); 978-0-7613-4512-1 (pbk); 978-0-7613-6236-4 (E-book). Ages 3–8.

Lilly's mother volunteers at Shalom House, "a place for older people to live if they need extra help." The first time Lilly accompanies her mother, she clings closely and is too shy to talk to the residents. With each passing week, Lilly begins to warm up and to feel more comfortable, until she ultimately chooses to celebrate her birthday at Shalom House and invites all the residents as her guests. Lakritz does a wonderful job of depicting the activities and the people in nursing and retirement homes. The residents attempt to engage Lilly in conversations that are friendly, warm and very realistic. Moreover, Lilly's transformation is portrayed with empathy and care. The illustrations are bright and fun; they show a happy place with friendly people. The only Jewish elements of the book are the name of the residence and the people who live there—Mrs. Seidel, Dr. Berman, and Mrs. Rosenbaum. Nonetheless, the story would be helpful in preparing children to visit assisted-living facilities and to interact with the elderly. It is recommended for all libraries.

Deborah Abecassis, Montreal, Canada

**Rubinger, Ami.** *Big Cat, Small Cat.* Transl. from the Hebrew by Ray Baitner. New York: Abbeville Kids Press, 2008. 28 pp. \$13.95. ISBN: 978-0-7892-1029-6. Ages 3–6.

**Rubinger, Ami.** *I Dream of an Elephant.* Transl. from the Hebrew by Ray Baitner. New York: Abbeville Kids Press, 2008. 28 pp. \$13.95. ISBN: 978-0-7892-1058-6. Ages 3–6.

Standout, fanciful illustrations in gorgeous colors dominate these picture books. Both feature rhyming couplets requiring young readers to fill in the blanks. In *Big Cat, Small Cat*, Rubinger uses cartoon-like illustrations of smiling, frowning, angry and sad cats of all sizes to teach the concept of opposites. For example, on one double-page spread, there is a cat who is big, a cat who is small, a cat who is short, and a cat who is...—letting children fill in the blank to complete the rhyme.

*I Dream of an Elephant* teaches colors, and uses jolly elephants that dance, sing, and play the guitar. Each double-page spread focuses on a specific color to help the reader fill in the blank. For instance, in "Jumping and playing the whole morning through! / I dream of an elephant whose color is..." Rubinger has set the multi-colored elephants against a blue background. From the covers and end-papers to the backs of these books, the vibrantly colorful illustrations combine perfectly to support the brief text, and make them very effective for use with nursery school classes.

Although there is no Jewish content in either of these books, they are recommended for purchase for collections that include books written by Israeli authors and translated from Hebrew into

English, and where there is a need for imaginatively illustrated concept books.

Andrea Davidson, The Temple-Tifereth Israel, Beachwood, OH

## NEWS ABOUT BOOKS

Goldie Sigal, the author/illustrator of *Stingy Buzi* and *King Solomon* has won the Canadian Jewish Book Award for Yiddish. The following is a quote from the jury citation: "A heritage is passed from generation to generation through storytelling. Yiddish especially lends itself to storytelling. *Stingy Buzi* and *King Solomon* is a delightful tale for children told in Yiddish, English, as well as Yiddish transliterated into English. Written and illustrated by Goldie Sigal, retired Judaica Librarian at McGill University, it is based on legends and folktales about King Solomon as interpreted in a Yiddish play which was mimeographed by Montreal Folk Shule teacher, J. J. Grossman, in the 1940s. Sigal takes the traditional Yiddish tale and presents it as a colourful modern graphic novel with appeal to children today." *Stingy Buzi* and *King Solomon* was reviewed in the February/March 2010 issue of the *AJL Newsletter*.

Editor's note: My interview with Goldie Sigal, as well as with several other Canadian Jewish Book Award winners (2010), will be featured in an upcoming edition of Heidi Estrin's Book of Life podcast: [www.bookoflifepodcast.com](http://www.bookoflifepodcast.com).

A favorite with young children, *King Solomon and the Bee*, written by Dalia Hardof Renberg and illustrated by Ruth Heller, has just been re-issued in paperback by Crocodile/Interlink Publishing of Northampton, Massachusetts. Through a combination of direct language and fanciful illustrations, it tells a tale about a humble little bee who repays the wise king's mercy by helping him solve one of the Queen of Sheba's riddles. Perfect for reading aloud, it is a crowd pleaser! The price is \$9.95 and the ISBN is 978-1-56656-815-9.

These titles, reviewed in the Adult Readers section, may also be of interest to teenagers

Azriel, Yakov. *Beads for the Messiah's Bride: Poems on Leviticus.*

Goldwasser, Dovid. *Starving Souls: A Spiritual Guide to Understanding Eating Disorders—Anorexia, Bulimia, Binging...*

Megdal, Howard. *The Baseball Talmud: The Definitive Position-by-Position Ranking of Baseball's Chosen Players.*

Roll, Yisroel. *Step Up to the Plate: Baseball, Judaism & How to Win the Game of Life.*

Loeterman, Ben. *The People v. Leo Frank.* DVD.  
*No. 4 Street of Our Lady.* DVD.

# Linda Silver interviews Anne Dublin

I'm proud to say that Anne Dublin, my friend, AJL colleague, and co-editor of AJL Newsletter reviews for children and teens will have her latest children's book published this fall. It's entitled *The Orphan Rescue* and the publisher is Second Story Press, Toronto. Anne and I recently talked about her experiences as a writer.

**Linda:** How many books for children have you written, Anne?

**Anne:** *The Orphan Rescue* is my sixth published book for young people. I've written a few other books, but they're collecting dust on my shelves.

**Linda:** Have they all had Jewish content?

**Anne:** Not all. For example, the books about June Callwood and L.M. Montgomery have no Jewish content; *Dynamic Women Dancers* has some Jewish content. However, I like to think that all my books have a "Jewish sensibility"; they look at the world through Jewish values like tikkun olam. I admire people who try to make the world a better place.

**Linda:** One of your books, a biography called *Bobbie Rosenfeld: The Olympian Who Could Do Everything*, was a Sydney Taylor Honor Book in 2004. How have your books been received by reviewers and, if you know, by readers?

**Anne:** I'm like most other writers. I forget the good reviews and remember the bad ones! One reviewer said that *Dynamic Women Dancers* is "an important, enjoyable and uplifting book." Another reviewer called *June Callwood: A Life of Action* "a rounded and engaging portrait of a remarkable woman." I'm very pleased when a kid reader tells me that my book has moved him or her. One child even dressed up like Bobbie Rosenfeld while she did a report about my book!

**Linda:** What was the inspiration for *The Orphan Rescue*?

**Anne:** A number of years ago, my father, Morris, told me about one of his sisters who was very poor and had to put her young son into the Jewish orphanage in Sosnowiec, Poland. That event happened in the 1930s. I wondered how the boy and his sister would have felt in such a situation. The family story was the impetus, but the book developed in ways I couldn't have predicted when I started writing.

**Linda:** You've written fiction and non-fiction, from a single biography of a Canadian athlete to a collective biography of women dancers, from historical fiction set in Toronto to historical fiction set in Poland. What motivates you to choose a particular topic?

**Anne:** My motivation comes from many different sources. Sometimes, something happens in my life that pushes me to express myself in writing; at other times, someone mentions an intriguing idea to me or I read something in a newspaper or magazine that sets me off. If you're open to possibilities, many ideas will come to you.

Of course, I've written a few books that have never been published. I wrote them because I loved the topic and wanted to find out more about it. For example, one book is historical fiction about timekeeping; another novel takes place in the early 1700s in Germany and the Netherlands; a third is a collection of stories and facts about salt.

**Linda:** What do you think is your biggest challenge when you write books for young people? How do you handle it?

**Anne:** My biggest challenge is to avoid writing what's trendy or

popular. As tempting as those books are (financially), I couldn't write a vampire book or one with lots of gross language and swearing. I try to be true to who I am—a Canadian Jew who is the daughter of Holocaust survivors—and to my vision of what makes good children's literature.

**Linda:** You review and edit as well as write. How would you assess the current state of writing for young people, especially books of Jewish content?

**Anne:** Since I began reviewing books, I've noticed a significant improvement in the quality of books published. The writing, artwork, and production values are generally of a higher caliber than they used to be. Of course, poor books are still being published and that makes me gnash my teeth and tear my hair. I wish publishers wouldn't waste their time and money producing second-rate books.

I'm glad to see that the subject matter of Jewish books is expanding beyond the immigrant experience and the Holocaust. The Jewish people are much more than those experiences, as significant as they were.

**Linda:** What's your greatest joy in writing? Are there any downsides?

**Anne:** My greatest joy occurs when the words come stamped onto the page and I can't get them down fast enough. I also love to do research and travel to unusual places. For example, I've visited salt flats in California, the clock at the town hall in Prague, and the city in Poland where *The Orphan Rescue* takes place. I meet wonderful people (like librarians) in my quest for information. I also enjoy doing readings and presentations of my books. I speak to groups of all ages—children to seniors—and always derive a great deal of satisfaction from sharing my books with them.

The down side of writing is my fear that I'll get stuck; that I won't be able to finish a book after I get started; that I'll run out of ideas or talent or strength. Or all the above. That's when my writing group is wonderful. We encourage each other to keep going, even when we're having a slow time or when the concerns of life intervene.

**Linda:** What's next?

**Anne:** When I was a teenager, I read a lot of science fiction by Asimov, Bradbury, and Heinlein. Right now, I'm working on a Jewish speculative fiction book that takes place in the near future. The book is taking me in directions that I hadn't expected, making me grow and stretch. I love the process and wonder where the journey will take me.

**Linda:** What do you do for fun?

**Anne:** I like to take long walks, swim, and practice yoga. I also love to attend ballet, opera, and theatre. And I sing in the choir at Holy Blossom Temple, where I used to be librarian.





## Anne's Published Works

### Novels

*Written on the Wind*, Vancouver: HodgePog Books, 2001.

*The Orphan Rescue*, Toronto: Second Story Press, 2010.

### Biography

*Dynamic Women Dancers*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2009.

*June Callwood: A Life of Action*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2006.

*Lucy Maud Montgomery: A Writer's Life*. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada, 2005.

*Bobbie Rosenfeld: The Olympian Who Could Do Everything*. Toronto: Second Story Press, 2004.

### Short stories (for adults)

"Degrees of Separation," Toronto: *Parchment*, 2009.

"This Ain't Graceland," Toronto: *Parchment*, 2006.

"At the Old Folks' Home or, What's Happening?" Toronto: *Parchment*, 2005.

"Can a Jewish Girl Have a Fairy Godmother?" Toronto: *Parchment*, 2004.

### Curriculum unit

"Teaching Jewish Values Through Literature" (with co-authors Donna Robins and Myrna Ross) Toronto: Board of Jewish Education, 2003.

### Article

"Why Should Young Adults Read Holocaust Literature, Anyway?" Birmingham, England: *The New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, 2002.

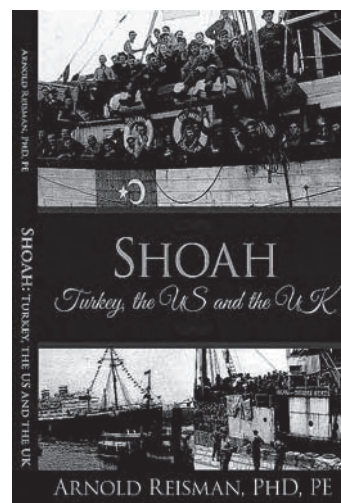
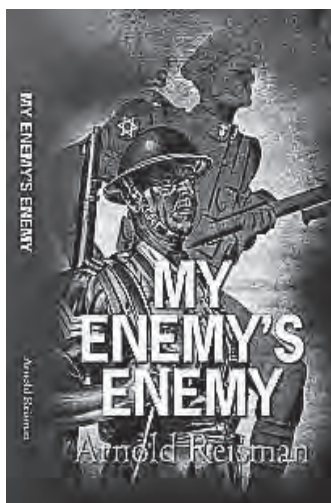
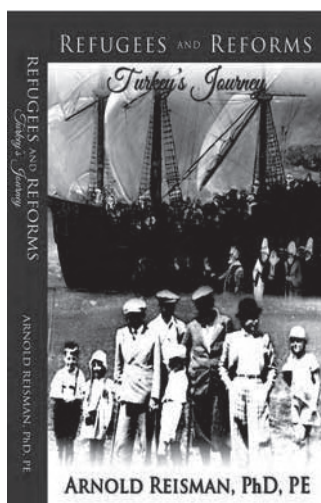
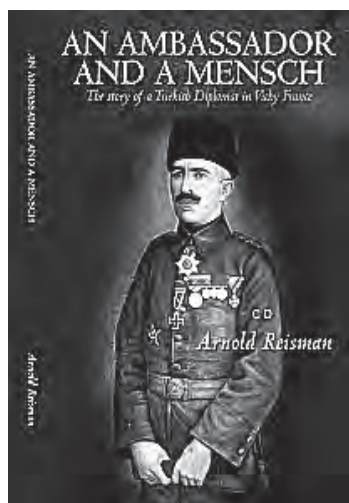
## The 2010 Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee's Quest for the Best

RACHEL KAMIN

The 2010 Quest for the Best from the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee is now available from Amazon for \$18.00. Simply go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and type "2010 Quest for the Best" in the search window and add it to your cart!

This 274-page soft-cover book includes the committee's reviews of over 120 books of Jewish interest for children and teens published in 2009. Additional information about the award, as well as a complete list of past winners, is also included. In the past, this compilation was available on CD, but many people did not use this wonderful resource to its full advantage. Now that it is in print, you can flip through it to see all of the books submitted for consideration to the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee. An invaluable collection development tool, you can browse over 600 positive and negative reviews to determine which books are right for your library.

We'd love to hear your feedback! Please let us know what you think of this new print edition and how the committee can make it better next year. Contact Rachel Kamin, compiler, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, at [rachelkamin@gmail.com](mailto:rachelkamin@gmail.com) with your comments and suggestions.



Four new books by Arnold Reisman, are welcome additions to Jewish literature, each one focusing on specific events that impacted the lives of the Jewish people. *An Ambassador and A Mensch: The story of a Turkish Diplomat in Vichy France* relates the heroic deeds of Behic Erkin and his staff who saved thousands of Jews in both occupied and Vichy France. Against the will of Berlin, Vichy, and Ankara, they placed their careers and lives in jeopardy. *Refugees and Reforms: Turkey's Journey* details the impact that European scholars and scientists had on the creation of the modern Turkish Republic. Discarded by the Nazis, their lives were saved by their invitations to Turkey. Along similar lines, *Shoah: Turkey, the US and the UK* compares each country's efforts to save lives during one of humanity's darkest hours. *My Enemy's Enemy* tells the story of the various all Jewish units in the British army, beginning with the Zion Mule Corps and ending with Israel's statehood. Dr. Reisman uses archival documents and pictures from various sources to support the work in all of his books. To see all of his books, visit [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

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# Seattle Convention Highlights

Convention attendees raved about the Seattle meeting, from the keynote speaker to the presentations and tours. They also mentioned the beautifully appointed hotel and the delicious food. Here is a selection of comments from SSC librarians Patricia Givens, Wendy Marx, and Chaya Wiesman.

## The Keynote Address

Joseph Janes's keynote speech was engaging and witty, setting the tone for a fascinating few days in Seattle.

*Wendy Marx*

Professor Janes believes that librarians are the keepers of humanity's stories and that we help the next generation of stories be added to our collective memory.

*Patricia Givens*

Joseph Janes was witty and interesting, and despite jetlag for many of us, people still found the energy to go out later to see the Fourth of July fireworks display.

*Chaya Wiesman*

## The Seattle Public Library

The library was built in 2004 and the modern architecture, with its glass exterior, as well as the innovative and colorful layout was very impressive. It houses more than one million items and has more than 400 computers available for public use.

*Chaya Wiesman*

Tour highlights included soundproof practice rooms on the music floor stocked with pianos and available free to the public, and big Dewey Decimal numbers painted on the spiraling floor, channeling the Yellow Brick Road.

*Patricia Givens*

We were wowed by the fiction/readers' advisory librarian, David Wright. In a very interesting talk at the library, he explained what he did as a reader's advisor and what tools he used to accomplish his job. We all came away energized with ways to implement his ideas in our libraries.

*Chaya Wiesman*

The ultra-modern Seattle Public Library was the venue for a talk by SPL librarian and NPR contributor David Wright. I learned about great Web sites and blogs such as Williamsburg Regional Library's, SPL's Questionland, Shelfari, Library Thing, Good Reads, NoveList, NoveList Plus, ALA Magazine's Booklist online and Reader's Advisory Online, Shelf Talk and The Strangr. David has two pages on Library Thing (his member name is "guy librarian"). I had no idea that reader's advisory was so big.

*Patricia Givens*

## Outstanding Presentations

My favorite session was the 2009-2010 Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee tells all.

*Wendy Marx*

Incoming SSC president Joyce Levine gave a presentation on AJL's wiki, which is an amazing resource for Jewish educators and librarians. The wiki contains lesson plans, sample library policies and mission statements and much more.

*Patricia Givens*

Another impressive session featured *Rashi's Daughters* author Maggie Anton and *Meet Rebecca (an American Girl)* author Jacqueline Dembar Greene. They spoke about the lengthy process of investigation that takes place before even one line is written, how they haunt libraries and locales, how librarians are their favorite people, and how research is their favorite part of writing.

*Chaya Wiesman*

I attended the lively panel discussions on Sydney Taylor winners and What's Hot, What's Not. I loved all the presentations and respectful disagreements, and learned about some noteworthy new books.

*Patricia Givens*

## Final Thoughts

What a treat to have enjoyed the beautiful views and weather of Seattle. Meeting up with those faces behind those articles I read throughout the year in the *AJL Newsletter* was a joy.

*Wendy Marx*

The Fairmont Olympic Hotel was a luxurious venue where we were wine and dined on the local specialties.

*Chaya Wiesman*

I met so many special people and experienced so many special moments at convention. Thank you for making my time at the convention so worthwhile and memorable.

*Patricia Givens*



Photograph by Elliot H. Gertel



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RAS member Elliot Gertel arrived in Seattle from Washington, DC, where he attended the annual meeting of the American Library Association. Here is his report.

### **From Washington, DC to Washington State: A Tale of Two Library Conferences**

ELLIOT H. GERTEL

DC. The big news for AJL members is that for the first time, AJL took part in the American Library Association's annual conference as an ALA affiliate. Ellen Zyroff, past chair of ALA's Jewish Information Committee (JIC) and I, current JIC chair, staffed the affiliates' booth in the exhibits hall of the Washington, DC Convention Center, where we provided information and literature on AJL. At a luncheon with other affiliate representatives and ALA executive director Keith Michael Fiels, I gave a brief description of AJL's organization, mission, goals, history, upcoming conventions, awards, and scholarships.

We discussed the significance of AJL's affiliation with ALA at the JIC business meeting. It was generally agreed that more participation by AJL members at ALA annual conferences and midwinter meetings was essential to increasing awareness of AJL in the broader library community. Some means to achieve this goal include holding AJL sessions at ALA conferences, making some of our annual conventions part of ALA annual conference as some other affiliates routinely do, and, of course, greatly

increasing participation by AJL members in ALA conferences and JIC programs. Volunteers are also needed to help staff the AJL affiliates' booth. Please mark your calendars for upcoming ALA events, which are listed on the ALA Web site at [www.ala.org/ala/conferencesevents/upcoming/index.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/conferencesevents/upcoming/index.cfm).

JIC presented two programs in Washington. The first included Judith Schaefer's film, "So Long Are You Young: Samuel Ullman's Poems and Passion," a documentary on the unforeseen international impact of a single poem. Historian and Ullman biographer Margaret Armbruster provided more details following the screening. The presentation on German-Jewish immigrant Ullman (1840-1924), a businessman and humanitarian, told of his courageous and progressive actions to improve education for Black children in Birmingham, Alabama. His philosophy influenced General Douglas MacArthur, post-World War II Japanese and Korean society, and prominent political figures such as Robert and Edward Kennedy.

The second JIC program was on the 2000-year history of the Jewish community in Romania, the history of Romanian Jews in the US and Canada, Romanian Holocaust survivors and righteous Gentiles, library materials on North American Romanian Jewry, and the publication, *Salute to Romanian Jews in America and Canada, 1850-2010: History, Achievements, and Biographies* authored by the first presenter, Vladimir Wertsman. Lyn Miller-Lachman, editor-in-chief of *Multicultural Review* and Jewish day school teacher, led an interactive presentation on teaching the Holocaust for all levels of students.

**Seattle.** AJL's 45th Annual Convention at the beautiful historic Fairmont Olympic Hotel in downtown Seattle featured first-rate programs along with the annual opportunity to network with colleagues from far and wide. Here is a rundown of some of the sessions I attended at the convention.

In "Researching Sephardic Jews," Shulamith Berger highlighted the several hundred rare Ladino monographs that make up a significant portion of the Sephardic collections at Yeshiva University. As part of Special Collections at YU, there is a Sephardic Reference Room containing a large compilation of books, serials, and audio recordings in Ladino, English, and Hebrew. *La Vara*, the weekly New York Ladino language newspaper (published from 1922-1948) is available in microform in the Gottesman Library at YU. Amalia Levi discussed the use of social media to link historians and scholars in other disciplines for the purpose of constructing online Sephardic studies archives. In addition to focusing on the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire, Levi discussed identity and gender questions.

"Bibliophile treasures" featured two booksellers, Eric Chaim Kline and Henry Hollander. Kline covered the gamut of appraisals, evaluations, reviews, and auctions of rare and out-of-print Judaica and Hebraica in reference to librarians uncovering rare or other valuable materials in their collections and how these can be problematic in terms of storage and conservation. He also discussed relative values of such items. Hollander revealed methods of untangling the knots in the vast array of online book vending resources, which often present misleading or careless descriptions of the items offered. The aim was to aid buyers in locating materials at the best value in the most desirable condition for the money spent.

The "Manuscripts and Archives" session was presented by Yoram Bitton and Rachel Misrati. Bitton spoke about one of the lesser-known rare Hebraica collections at Columbia University, consisting of some Genizah fragments, manuscripts, and antiquarian books dating from the twelfth to nineteenth centuries. Misrati drew on statistical analysis to determine who the user population is for the archives at the National Library of Israel. This rich research collection contains more than four hundred personal archives, including the papers of Ahad Ha'am, S.Y. Agnon, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, and A.B. Yehoshua.

As a part of "Processing Collections," Zachary Baker detailed the digitization of approximately one-half of Stanford University Libraries' Tel Aviv collections, which include books, periodicals, maps, pamphlets, blueprints, postcards, correspondence, photographs, and ephemera. The 1000 postcards and photos comprise the bulk of the materials digitized at present. Jasmin Nof discussed how a backlog of some 40,000 Hebrew and Yiddish books at University of Maryland Libraries is being front-loaded with minimal cataloging so that the records can be accessed by patrons much sooner than they would be had conventional workflow procedures been followed.

In the "Jewish History and Economics" session, Heidi Lerner surveyed some 34 free online resources that contain economic data and statistics. Marlene Schiffman discussed Jewish resistance to the requirement of modern nation-states that all citizens take on surnames. The assignment of such names by government agents led to attempts by some Jews to change their identifiably Jewish names in order to escape anti-Semitism.

In "Building a Successful Jewish History Archive through Collaboration: The Washington State Jewish Historical Society Archive," Nicolette Bromberg, Karyl Winn, and Doris Stiefel told how the history of the Jews in the state of Washington has been preserved in the Washington State Jewish Historical Society Archives. The archives contain memoirs, letters, personal and organizational papers, photographs, and more than 300 oral histories of Washington Jews on tape and in transcription. Ongoing projects include provision of online finding aids to the archives and photographs.

Rita Sacal kicked off the "Yiddish Culture" session with a look at the performances, actors, directors, playwrights, music, costumes, and scenery that made Buenos Aires one of the pre-eminent venues for Yiddish literature and theater in the first half of the twentieth century. She also spoke about the theater's seamier side: A Polish-Jewish gang in Buenos Aires known as Tzvi Migdal lured young Jewish women to Latin America, where they were compelled to fan out into Yiddish theaters to persuade men in the audience to pay for sexual favors. Faith Jones presented a survey of writers and publishers who participated in enriching the cultural life of Winnipeg, Manitoba, beginning around 1910 and reaching its pinnacle by the 1940s.

Yossi Galron, moderator of Hasafran since its beginning, and compiler of the online *Leksikon Ha-sifrut Ha-Ivrit ha-Hadashah*, was this year's Rosaline and Myer Feinstein lecturer. Yossi spoke about his published Hebrew bibliographic studies in "From Chaltura to Cultura, or My Path to Hebrew Bibliography." Not only did Yossi wear a tie during his lecture, but several hours later in the lobby of the Fairmont Olympic Hotel, he was still sporting the neck gear!

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# Reviews of Titles for Adults

EDITED BY MERRILY F. HART AND DANIEL SCHEIDE

## FICTION & POETRY

**Azriel, Yakov.** *Beads for the Messiah's Bride: Poems on Leviticus.* St. Louis, MO: Time Being Books, 2009. 118 p. \$15.95 (ISBN 978-156809-128-0).

Yakov Azriel has written a book of poems on what might seem like an unlikely subject, the book of Torah that is mainly laws of priestly conduct and, in particular, the laws of sacrifice. The poem entitled "Beads," from which the book's title is derived, is a personal meditation on the process of repentance on Yom Kippur. Other poems are midrashic in nature, such as the one entitled "Night in the Sukkah of Joseph and his Brothers." Some poems are more effective than others but on the whole, this is a well-crafted poetry collection that readers will want to return to again and again. It is recommended for high school and synagogue collections.

Marion M. Stein, NY

**Del Bourgo, David.** *Prague Spring.* Charleston, SC: Mystere Press, 2009. 276 p. \$14.95 (ISBN 978-1-44211-987-1).

Inspector Simon Wolfe of the San Francisco Police Department pursues the killer of a United States congressman's son. The inspector's past as a Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter intrudes in the process of tracking down the killer and solving the murder. The fast-moving story, involving drugs and prostitution, takes place in the late sixties in the Bay Area. This is the author's first published novel. He is a poet and painter who lives in the Los Angeles area. The book is an appropriate addition to fiction collections in Jewish community center and public libraries.

Susan Freiband, Arlington, VA

**Leegant, Joan.** *Wherever You Go.* New York: Norton, 2010. 253 p. \$23.95. (ISBN-978-0-39305-476-7).

Joan Leegant's award-winning first book was the story collection *An Hour in Paradise* (2003). It has taken Leegant seven years to give us her first novel, and it was worth the wait. *Wherever You Go*, set primarily in Israel, is a luminous journey through the lives of three young Jews struggling with issues of territory and home. Yona Stern travels from New York to Israel to make amends with her estranged sister, who lives in a West Bank settlement. Aaron Blinder, a year-abroad dropout searching for fulfillment, thinks he has found meaning in life by associating with a violent fringe of Israeli society. Mark Greenglass, a New-York-born Jerusalem Talmud scholar who has lost his religious passion, finds himself unexpectedly caught in the drama.

The novel is a small masterpiece, small only in that Leegant needs few pages to say a lot. Her book is eloquent, timely, and thought provoking—sure to be a hit with book clubs. In tackling Israel's complex political and social situation, Leegant, who teaches at Bar Ilan University and lives in Boston and Israel, doesn't give all the answers, but she certainly asks all the right questions. Seven years ago, Leegant was selected for the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers program. If you didn't

discover her then, be sure to do so now. Her new book is highly recommended for all libraries that collect fiction.

Elizabeth Edelgass, Jewish Community Library of Greater New Haven, Woodbridge, CT

**Miller, Lily Poritz.** *In a Pale Blue Light: A Novel.* Toronto: Sumach Press, 2009. 256 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-89454-983-7).

Set in Cape Town in the years before and during the Second World War, the story is narrated through the eyes of Libka, the twelve-year-old daughter of Eastern European immigrants, at a vulnerable moment in her life, when she must help her mother and her younger siblings cope with the sudden death of their father. Possibly a result of the author's long absence from South Africa, the novel has an almost dream-like haunting quality. The story takes place away from the popular Jewish ghetto in Maynard Stree. The author brings alive a lesser-known neighborhood that has today been converted into an up-market boutique area known as the Cape Quarter. With a lyrical sensitivity Miller captures the ambiance of the Cape's diverse population groups. Her protagonist, Libka, displays a political maturity beyond her years, and her defiance results in her expulsion from her school and ostracism from her peers. Her insights and reactions to difficult circumstances shed light on South Africa's racially divided society and on its Jewish community. Many autobiographical memoirs have been written since the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994. This fictionalized memoir has an added freshness and originality, and is highly recommended for synagogue and research libraries.

Veronica Belling, University of Cape Town, SA

**Shrayer, Maxim D.** *Yom Kippur in Amsterdam: Stories.* Syracuse: Syracuse University Press (The Library of Modern Jewish Literature), 2009. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-81560-918-6).

In this debut collection of short stories, Maxim Shrayer investigates shades of Russian-Jewish identity and experience in America. His felicitous prose focuses on the lives of Russian immigrants who have made a life here, not the trials and tribulations of those just arrived. Mark Kagan, a graduate student at Yale in love with gentile Sarah, casually takes up Hebrew studies with a yeshiva student, Zalman, as he agonizes over the issues of marrying a non-Jew in "The Disappearance of Zalman." Zalman's studious impassioned Hasidism affects the assimilated Kagan deeply but does not appear to bring him closer to Judaism. However, the story's final paragraphs, as in several other stories, deliver a surprise.

Maxim Shrayer joins a list of Russian-born authors enriching American Jewish fiction with stories and novels, but he is also a noted scholar, professor of Russian, English and Jewish studies at Boston College, author of several nonfiction titles, and editor of the two-volume award winning *Anthology of Jewish-Russian Literature*. The settings of his stories are often universities and the experiences are universal. Recommended for all fiction collections.

Merrily F. Hart, Ann Arbor, MI



**Silva, Daniel.** *The Rembrandt Affair*. New York: Putnam, 2010. 476 p. \$26.95 (ISBN 978-0-39915-658-8).

Gabriel Allon, former Mossad agent, has retired to the Cornwall coast of England with his wife, Chiara, and has found some peace painting seascapes. But this is interrupted when an old friend visits and reports the murder of an art restorer in the old town of Glastonbury, and the theft of a long lost Rembrandt portrait. Gabriel reluctantly takes on the task of finding the Rembrandt, following clues that take him to Amsterdam, Buenos Aires, and Lake Geneva, in Switzerland. Using the "follow the money" strategy, Gabriel encounters a lovely English journalist, an art thief, and a Swiss billionaire. There are lots of twists and turns in this enthralling thriller, perhaps Silva's finest novel. Highly recommended for collections of popular fiction.

*Lee Wixman, Boynton Beach, FL*

**Stern, Steve.** *The Frozen Rabbi*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2010. 370 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-56512-619-0).

Eliezer ben Zephyr, a nineteenth-century mystic, was in a meditative trance when bad weather struck, submerging him in a newly-formed pond, where he froze. Bernie Karp is a twenty-first century teenager who discovers ben Zephyr in the freezer in his parents' basement. When he questions his parents, he learns that the rabbi has been handed down through the family as a sort of talisman. An equally fierce storm hits Memphis, knocking out power, and when Bernie checks on the rabbi, he has defrosted.

The rabbi opens a "House of Enlightenment," where he will "peddle be-a-ti-tude," and "also sell a few specialty items on the side—books and talismans, red string to ward off the evil eye, everything marked up and elegantly repackaged of course." Bernie finds that he can separate his soul from his body and explore the heavens. The rabbi ends up in jail and an epilogue is so bizarre it is perfect for this quirky book.

A strong sense of place in the sweep of Jewish history from the shtetl, to the Lower East Side, to the nascent state of Israel, and to Memphis, keep the story grounded as its interesting characters take flight, both bodily and spiritually. Appearances may not be what they seem, as great-grandmother Jocheved disguises herself as a man, and the grandfatherly rabbi makes up for lost time in the sex department. The author successfully weaves Old World mysticism and New World capitalism into a witty, yet poignant story, which is highly recommended for all Jewish libraries.

*Kathe Pinchuck, MTS Company, Brooklyn, NY*

**Vieira, Nelson, ed.** *Contemporary Jewish Writing in Brazil: An Anthology*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press (Jewish Writing in the Contemporary World), 2009. 287 p. \$60 (ISBN 978-0-8032-4662-1).

This pioneering English-language collection of Brazilian Jewish writing includes short stories, chronicles, excerpts from novels and novellas, brief biographies of the twenty featured writers, and an interview with renowned writer Moacyr Scliar. The selections reflect more than 25 years of research by the book's translator and editor, Dr. Nelson Vieira. His introduction is a dense and detailed exploration of the sociocultural history of Jewish literature in Brazil. The anthology showcases a fascinating selection of literature not previously available in English, representing diverse time periods and experiences, and covering

such topics as immigration and adaptation, the Holocaust and Holocaust survivors in Brazil, race relations, gender and coming of age. It is recommended for academic library collections.

*Amanda Seigel, New York Public Library, NY*

**Wiesel, Elie.** *A Mad Desire to Dance*. Translated from the French by Catherine Temerson. New York: Schocken Books, 2009. 272 p. \$25.00; \$15.00 pbk. (978-0-30736-650-7; 978-0-80521-212-9).

Elie Wiesel reprises the themes of memory, survivor guilt, and the importance of bearing witness in this novel that tells the story of Doriel Waldman, a scholarly Holocaust survivor. He and his father hide in a barn in Poland while his mother works for the Resistance. His two siblings die at the hands of the Nazis and his parents are killed in an automobile accident in France after the war. Doriel is a scholar of medieval Jewish history, but he is incapable of forming relationships. Lonely, depressed, and afraid that he may be possessed by a dybbuk, he seeks help from Dr. Thérèse Goldschmidt, a psychoanalyst who is also a survivor. He is a difficult patient, arguing with her, and refusing to discuss his parents. The novel unfolds as a series of vignettes from Doriel's life, illuminated with notes from the therapy sessions. It weaves back and forth between past and present, and the dramatic events in Doriel's life sometimes get lost in his philosophical musings and kvetching. Readers who stick with the story will be rewarded with a surprising conclusion. Although this book lacks the power of *Night*, it is a worthy addition to the Holocaust fiction genre. Public and synagogue libraries should consider it. Book groups in need of a challenge may want to discuss it, too.

*Barbara M. Bibel, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA;  
Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA*

## NONFICTION

**Apelbaum, Laura Cohen & Claire Uziel, eds.** *Jewish Life in Mr. Lincoln's City*. Washington, DC: Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington; Lillian and Albert Small Jewish Museum, 2009. 171 p. \$15.00 (ISBN 978-0-615-27879-7).

This book draws its title from an exhibit that was sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society and the Lillian and Albert Small Museum. It contains articles by scholars on American Jewish history, Abraham Lincoln, and the Civil War. One of the many fascinating stories in the book is about Lincoln's Jewish doctor, Isachar Zacharie, a chiropodist who relieved the terrible pains in Lincoln's feet. The grateful Lincoln had such trust in him that he sent him on missions to southern Jewish communities. Another tells of General Ulysses S. Grant who, suspicious of Jewish business practices, issued what is now referred to as General Grant's Order No. 11, which expelled all Jews from the territories of Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee under the Thirteenth Army Corps. Abraham Lincoln rescinded Order No. 11. Fourteen years later, President Ulysses S. Grant attended the dedication of Adas Israel Congregation's building in Washington, DC, and is reported to have made a contribution to the synagogue. The slim volume includes an index bibliographic sources. It provides a fascinating and balanced picture (describing both Union and Confederate sympathizers) of Jewish life in Washington, DC



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before, during, and after the Civil War. Recommended for synagogue and university libraries.

*Ellen Share, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC*

**Avital, Moshe.** *The Failure of Man and the Enigma of God's Silence.* Jerusalem: Mazo Publishers, 2010. 228 p. \$29.95 (ISBN 978-965-7344-62-0).

Born in Ruthenia, Moshe Avital, a survivor of the Shoah and several concentration camps, has spent much of his life writing and lecturing about the Holocaust. His book deals not only with Holocaust history, but also with Holocaust theology and the guilt of the German people, the world powers, and collaborators, Jewish and gentile. Avital agrees with Daniel Goldhagen's conclusions that the German population was and still is by nature brutal and anti-Semitic, and that it cooperated willingly with the Nazi government's decrees even to participating in the killings of innocent men, women, and children. It follows that he urges no forgiveness for Germany or its people, including the younger generations that had nothing to do with the Holocaust.

The book contains a wealth of knowledge but is marred by typographical errors (Hannah Arendt is cited as Chana Arndet, for example). I recommend it despite the author's uncompromising stance and the sloppy editing because it offers many valuable details about the Shoah and a thoughtful discussion of the problematic role of God during the Holocaust.

*Susanne M. Batzdorff, Santa Rosa, CA*

**Balint, Benjamin.** *Running Commentary: the Contentious Magazine that Transformed the Jewish Left into the Neoconservative Right.* New York: Public Affairs, 2010. 275 p. \$26.95 (ISBN 978-58648-749-2). Reviewed from an ARC.

The development of this contemporary "flagship of neo-conservatism," from its launching in 1945 as the monthly publication of the American Jewish Committee and the voice of American/Jewish liberalism under the editorial guidance of Elliot Cohen, to its current phase under John Podhoretz, is fascinating reading for anyone interested in the history of the intellectual and political life of Jewish Americans. Balint describes in detail how *Commentary* was created for a second-generation immigrant community struggling for a voice—in English—that would reflect its roots as working-class poor but intellectually rich marginalized Jews. The book follows the events and the characters that shaped the magazine from its liberal and anti-communist leanings in the 1950s, through its radical period in the 1960s, and its emergence as a conservative organ of the community in the 1970s. Mirroring political and cultural trends of American life, the magazine published articles by Arendt, Howe, and Scholem, as well as stories by Roth, Malamud, Ozick and Baldwin. It followed Jewish life from the end of WWII and the aftermath of the Holocaust, through the creation of the State of Israel and the ensuing wars that threatened its existence.

The ten short chapters provide a detailed context for each era of *Commentary* with its distinct editors and writers. They are accompanied by meticulous notes and an extensive bibliography. Highly recommended for academic libraries that collect in the areas of American and Jewish American history and intellectual life, as well as American journalism.

*Dr. Yaffa Weisman, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA*

**Bartlet, Suzanne.** *Licoricia of Winchester: Marriage, Motherhood and Murder in the Medieval Anglo-Jewish Community.* London: Valentine Mitchell, 2009. 160 p. \$64.95 (ISBN 978-0-85303-822-1).

The Jewish community in medieval England was short-lived. It was born after the Norman Conquest in 1066, and reached a definitive end with the expulsion of the Jews in 1290. During those two centuries, Jews played a crucial role in the English economy and produced businesspeople of epic stature. Copious records survive from the Middle Ages, which provide historians with a great deal of information about this period. But the vast majority of that information makes for extremely dull reading.

Suzanne Bartlet became interested in the Jews of Winchester when archeological excavations near her Winchester home revealed remnants of the Jewish cemetery. Probing the topic, she came across the figure of Licoricia, a Jewish woman who was one of the wealthiest and most influential Jews of her time. Over the course of years of painstaking archival research, Bartlet uncovered information about every stage of Licoricia's life, allowing us a rare glimpse of a medieval Jewish woman in remarkable detail. Through the story of Licoricia and her children, the painful last decades of Jewish life in medieval England are revealed. The book is not an easy text for the casual reader but it contains fascinating vignettes and pithy comments that bring the dry data to life.

*Pinchas Roth, Hebrew University, Jerusalem*

**Blenkinsopp, Joseph.** *Judaism, the First Phase: The Place of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Origins of Judaism.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009. 262 p. \$30.00 (ISBN 978-0-80286-450-5).

Blenkinsopp demonstrates a thorough understanding of previous scholarship and the biblical text, yet his work is still very readable and engaging. Even if readers do not agree with Blenkinsopp's conclusions, there is much to consider in this thought-provoking work. Using a historical critical approach, Blenkinsopp draws four broad conclusions. First, the origins of Judaism and Jewish sectarianism date back not to the Hellenistic period, but earlier to the Persian period. Second, the conflict over continuity and discontinuity that is evident in Ezekiel 40-48 and Ezra-Nehemiah dates back to the Babylonian Diaspora and is reflected in some of the later inter-testamental literature. Third, the arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah in Judah was not really a "return to Zion," but a diaspora in reverse, from a well-established colony in southern Mesopotamia to a new community. Fourth, while Ezra the priest implemented an exclusive ideology in the religious realm, Nehemiah the governor implemented the same exclusive ideology in the political realm. The book is recommended for academic and large synagogue libraries.

*Beth A. Bidlack, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL*

**Boccaccini, Gabriele and Giovanni Ibba, eds.** *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: The Evidence of Jubilees.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009. 474 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-80286-409-3).

This book is a collection of 28 papers presented at the Fourth Enoch Seminar held in July 2007. The theme that year was the "Jubilees enigma" that is, the discrepancy between the early Enoch literature, which does not mention the Mosaic Torah, and the book of Jubilees, which includes both the Mosaic and Eno-



chic traditions. Scholars offered different interpretations of the incongruity. "Some claimed that Jubilees was a direct product of Enochic Judaism with some Mosaic influence. ... Some suggested that Jubilees was a conscious synthesis of Enochic and Mosaic tradition, yet remaining autonomous from both. Some asserted that Jubilees was essentially a Mosaic text with some Enochic influence. ... Finally, some questioned the very existence of a gulf between Enochic and Mosaic traditions as competing forms of Judaism at the time of Jubilees." The editors allow these views to stand in tension rather than trying to resolve or unify them. This book is an essential purchase for academic libraries, especially those collecting in the area of Second Temple Judaism.

Beth A. Bidlack, *University of Chicago, Chicago, IL*

**Bowman, Steven B.** *The Agony of Greek Jews, 1940-1945.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009. 325 p. \$55.00 (ISBN 978-0-8047-5584-9).

In the Shoah, the Greek Jewish population suffered a larger decline proportionally than any nationality. Professor Bowman has, in meticulous detail, provided the English-language reader the most comprehensive and up-to-date narrative of this otherwise little-known Jewish community in southeastern Europe, or at least what is left of it as a result of the Nazi onslaught and occupation of Greece during World War II.

Bowman culled his material from eight national archives, a multitude of libraries, and personal interviews. In this companion piece to the author's *Jewish Resistance in Wartime Greece* (Vallentine Mitchell, 2006), Bowman goes beyond a description of the genocide to explore the social distinctions between the Greek-speaking Romanioto and the Judeo-Spanish-speaking Sephardim. He also probes the role of the Jews in the fractured Greek domestic politics that were intertwined with the Greek Orthodox Church. Bowman's treatment of Salonika Zionists and efforts to get Jews into mandatory Palestine makes interesting reading. There is also material on those who offered succor, and on the part Jews played in the Greek resistance movement. This book will certainly be the standard resource on the subject, at least for the foreseeable future.

Sanford R. Silverburg, *Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Collins, John J.** *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2010. 266 p. \$26.00 (ISBN 978-0-80282-887-3).

The ancient scrolls, written in Hebrew and Aramaic, that were found in the caves of Qumran overlooking the Dead Sea in the 1940s have stimulated endless curiosity and a huge corpus of scholarly literature. Collins, a distinguished Bible expert at Yale Divinity School, has written several books about the Qumran scrolls. In this volume he explores the nature of the community that lived at Qumran. Considering each piece of evidence separately and carefully, he builds the argument that Qumran was only one of several communities belonging to the group identified by some writers as the Essenes, and that the communities may have differed from one another in their specific ways of life. Many of the scholarly arguments about Qumran have become self-absorbed and removed from common sense. Collins takes a fresh look at the evidence and the bigger picture, and his book is a good guide to the most recent publications for readers

unfamiliar with the subtle debates that have roiled the world of Qumran scholars.

Pinchas Roth, *Hebrew University, Jerusalem*

**Comins, Mike.** *Making Prayer Real: Leading Jewish Spiritual Voices on Why Prayer is Difficult and What to Do about It.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights. 280 p. \$18.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-417-7).

Mike Comins asks "how can we learn to contact God, and maintain our connection to the holy?" This book is a communal response, built primarily through interviews with more than 50 distinguished rabbis. The contributors (including A.J. Heschel, who is not mentioned on the cover) represent a wide range of beliefs. Comins notes that most of us pray only in special settings, particularly synagogues. He believes that the words we speak lose their meaning when they come from a prayer book rather than from the heart. The book begins with an analysis of the value of prayer, kavanah, and knowing holiness in our lives. It provides guidance and examples of ways to understand how we are changed by regular communion with the Most High. Comins challenges new *mitpalelim* to learn the siddur and the Hebrew language. He offers a series of 24 "practices," by which they can better understand prayer and make a firm and deep connection to God. *Making Prayer Real* should be available in synagogue libraries, where it can be recommended for use in counseling and with teens and adult education groups. It may also be of value in academic collections. The book includes a glossary and list of sources but no index.

Fred Isaac, *Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA*

**Dolgopolski, Sergey.** *What is Talmud? The Art of Disagreement.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2009. 333 p. \$60.00 (ISBN 978-0-82322-934-5).

*What is Talmud?* is actually two books: a study of the fifteenth-century Castilian Talmudist, Rabbi Isaac Canpanton, and a highly sophisticated contribution to post-Heideggerian philosophy. Dolgopolski employs aspects of Continental philosophy to explicate Canpanton's writings, and then uses those writings to suggest that "Talmud" presents a new way of looking at philosophical questions, especially in the realm of rhetoric and the significance of disagreement.

Canpanton was a highly influential teacher in pre-Expulsion Spain. His methodological treatise, *Darkhe ha-Talmud*, can still be found in yeshivot today, but very rarely are its theoretical underpinnings plumbed by students of the Talmud. Research over the past few decades, however, has revealed the extent to which Canpanton's Talmudic exegesis was informed by the philosophical disciplines of rhetoric and logic as they existed in his time. *What is Talmud?* is an important contribution to the field of medieval rabbinic exegesis and to contemporary philosophy.

Pinchas Roth, *Hebrew University, Jerusalem*

**Drinkwater, Gregg, Joshua Lesser, and David Shneer, eds.** *Torah Queries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible.* New York: New York University Press, 2009. 337 p. \$29.95 (ISBN 978-0-81472-012-7).

"Turn it and turn it again, for everything is in it." Quoting Pirke Avot in her foreword, Judith Plaskow reminds the reader

of the Jewish tradition of searching for the personal experience in the Torah. In this collection, writers from a wide variety of backgrounds and orientations—gay, straight, transsexuals, etc.—examine the weekly Torah portion. The authors are rabbis from all movements of Judaism, Jewish professionals, community activists, and lay leaders. They not only address the obvious questions of sex, sexuality, and gender roles, but also scrutinize many of our societal norms including the hierarchies that structure our lives, the ways we construct communities, how we determine and administer justice, and most important, how we relate to each other, G-d, and our sacred texts. The tone of the commentaries varies greatly: some are scholarly treatises drawing heavily on rabbinic sources, some are sociological or biological studies, while others are deeply moving personal essays. The book includes bibliographical references and an index. Highly recommended for all libraries.

Sheryl Stahl, *Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles.*

**Dwyer-Ryan, Meghan, Susan L. Porter and Lisa Fagin Davis.** *Becoming American Jews: Temple Israel of Boston.* Waltham: Brandeis University Press (Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture, and Life), 2009. 260 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-58465-790-3).

In 2001, in anticipation of its 150th anniversary celebration in 2004, Temple Israel of Boston hired Meghan Dwyer-Ryan as its first professional archivist. The author team of *Becoming American Jews*, Dwyer-Ryan, Porter, and Davis, relied heavily on the temple's archives, by then accessible and organized into at least 20 categories. The informative text, coupled with a well thought-out and appealing format make engaging reading. This is a book that can be scanned casually and also used as a reference tool. The text is augmented by more than 30 pages of extensive notes. Even the information in picture captions is supplemented in a special section, "Notes to the Sidebars and Images."

The bibliography refers to six manuscript collections in addition to the Temple Israel archives, plus published works and other materials. The appendix offers chronological lists of all the temple's rabbis (senior, associate and assistant), cantors and music directors, board presidents, sextons, and executive and education directors. Ann Abrams, AJL member and president of the AJL New England Chapter, is the first entry in the index.

As the title indicates, *Becoming American Jews* covers not only the specifics of what is now New England's largest Reform congregation, but also the larger history of Boston's Jewish community and the American Reform movement. This book is highly appropriate for current and former Temple Israel congregants, and for university and synagogue collections of Reform movement histories.

Irene K. Seff, *Albuquerque, NM*

**Engel, David.** *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press (Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture), 2010. 314 p. \$65.00 (ISBN 978-0-80475-951-9).

There are Jewish and non-Jewish historians who devote their scholarship to Jewish studies and to Holocaust studies. Engel's book addresses two important questions: Are Jewish historians more sensitive to Jewish studies and, therefore, more accurate

in their portrayal? Second, and more important to Engel, can or must the study of the Holocaust be separated from an overall Jewish theme? The author reviews European Jewish historiography examining the best-known Jewish historians who treat the Holocaust—Engel never uses the term Shoah—as a discrete socio-cultural-political phenomenon. He then explains his own approach, pointing to the works of many Jewish historians of the modern period who tend to paint a broad swath in the context of modern European history. He concludes that unless and until Jewish historians fashion a more integrated tableau, modern Jewish history will be less than complete.

Sanford R. Silverburg, *Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Engelking, Barbara, and Jacek Leociak.** *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 906 p. \$75.00 (ISBN 978-0-300-11234-4).

Originally published in Polish in 2001, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* is encyclopedic in scope and exhaustive in its documentation. Utilizing the analytical tools of social history and urban studies, the authors have produced the definitive study on the Warsaw Ghetto. At its peak close to half a million Jews—nearly one in every ten Holocaust victims—were crammed into a walled precinct occupying roughly one square mile in area. Tens of thousands died of disease and starvation within the Ghetto's walls; almost all of the rest perished in Treblinka and other extermination camps, or during the April 1943 Ghetto uprising.

Virtually all aspects of the Ghetto's existence are treated here in depth: topography and communications, institutions (official and clandestine), economic life (legal and illegal), community life (culture and entertainment, religious life, the underground), deportation, and armed struggle. The volume includes an introductory chapter on Jewish settlement patterns in Warsaw up to 1939 and an epilogue, "The Place Where the Ghetto Used to Be." It also contains numerous illustrations and maps within the text, plus two detailed foldout maps of the Ghetto before the revolt and a third map superimposing the city's present street layout on that of the Ghetto. "Who Will Write Our History?" wondered the Ghetto's archivist and historian Emanuel Ringelblum (the subject of Samuel Kassow's magisterial biography, published in 2007). This monumental work—which belongs in any research collection on European Jewish history and the Holocaust—helps to provide the answer.

Zachary M. Baker, *Stanford University*

**Florence, Roland.** *Emissary of the Doomed: Bargaining for Lives in the Holocaust.* New York: Viking, 2010. 336 p. \$27.95 (ISBN 978-0-67002-072-0).

In 1944, when many European Jewish communities were completely destroyed, the Jewish community in Hungary was still intact. After the Germans invaded Hungary, Adolf Eichmann offered a trade to Joel Brand, a Jewish businessman who worked with fellow Zionists to rescue Jews: the freedom of almost a million Jews in exchange for 10,000 heavy-duty military trucks. Brand contacted the Allies and the Jewish Agency in Palestine about the offer. Moshe Shertok, the head of the political department of the JA, presented the proposal to the British authorities. The British accused Brand of being a Nazi agent and sent him to

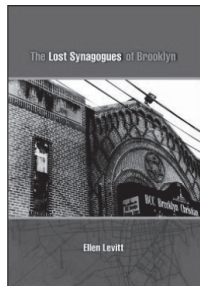
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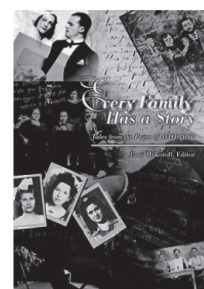


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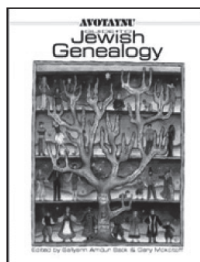


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prison in Cairo. Eichmann's offer was not accepted and the Nazis sent approximately 12,000 Hungarian Jews to their deaths every day. Florence provides the details of the missed opportunity of the Allies to bomb the railways leading to Auschwitz and other camps, and potentially change the outcome of the Holocaust. This book complements others on this subject, such as *Jews for Sale*, by Yehuda Bauer, and Brand's autobiography, *Desperate Mission*. Recommended for all libraries.

Sonia Smith, McGill University, Montreal

**Gerber, Michael.** *Jazz Jews*. Nottingham, GB: Five Leaves Publications, 2009. 600 p. \$70.00 (ISBN- 978-090712-324-8).

Who knew? Jews, it seems, play, and have played from the beginning, an important role in the development and course of modern jazz. If you have ever listened to a jazz recording or performance and wondered, "Is that musician Jewish?" this book should answer the question for you. Gerber writes about such jazz legends as George Gershwin, Benny Goodman, and Stan Getz, and he examines the contributions of lesser-known Jewish musicians, composers, song-writers, and singers. Although the story Gerber tells is through a distinctly Jewish lens, this book would be useful to anyone interested in the social history of jazz in America. It is filled with copious details, personal anecdotes, and interviews with jazz greats such as Artie Shaw. This is not easy reading but it can be satisfying to someone who enjoys listening to jazz and who appreciates the personal and political freedom this music can represent.

Maxine Schackman, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

**Goldwasser, Dovid.** *Starving Souls: A Spiritual Guide to Understanding Eating Disorders: Anorexia, Bulimia, Binging...* Jersey City, NJ: Ktav, 2010. 264 p. \$18.95. (ISBN 978-16028-0142-4).

Jews often profess that only "others" are alcoholics and that they do not suffer the ills of secular society. But it cannot be denied that psychological problems also plague the Jewish community. Rabbi Goldwasser has been at the forefront of providing guidance to those who suffer from eating disorders (ED), and his book draws on his experience, emphasizing the spiritual longing of those afflicted.

The first one hundred pages, a correspondence between the rav and a young woman with an eating disorder, illustrates how hard it is for a person with ED to deal with her disease. This is followed by descriptions and warning signs of many EDs such as anorexia, bulimia and cutting. The book goes on to discuss spiritual conflicts for Jews, such as honoring parents, eating festive meals, and violating the Sabbath when in the throes of the disease. Rabbi Goldwasser sets out a ten-step plan that includes communication, prayer, and early detection. The book includes prayers related to recovery and a concise glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish words. Throughout the text are references from the Torah and Talmud, and insights from prominent rabbis. With so much information on the Internet, and so many health professionals specializing in the field, the book is best suited to Orthodox parents who prefer not to use those resources, but *Starving Souls* is also an excellent resource for libraries whose patrons need access to the information.

Kathe Pinchuck, MTS Company, Brooklyn, NY

**Harel, Yaron.** *Syrian Jewry in Transition, 1840-1990*. Translated by Dena Ordan. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2010, 301 p. \$59.50 (ISBN 978-1-904113-65-2).

Yaron Harel examines political, economic, social, and cultural developments among Syrian Jewry from 1840, when Ottoman rule was reestablished in Syria, until 1880, the end of the Ottoman reform period, and the start of the gradual decline of the Jewish population due to emigration. The study is based on research in European state archives and Jewish archives (in Israel, Turkey, England and the US) and on published primary and secondary sources in European languages, Arabic, and Hebrew.

Harel begins with an examination of the Ottoman reforms and their implementation in Syria, with special reference to their impact on non-Muslim minorities. He then explores the geographical extent of the Jewish community, its socioeconomic composition, its role in the local economy, and communal administration and education. The legal status of the Jews in theory and practice is considered in detail as are relations with the Muslim majority and the other non-Muslim minorities. The study concludes with a consideration of the influence of the West.

The book includes a bibliography and an index; maps, especially of Damascus and Aleppo, would have been helpful. This is a very well-researched and comprehensive study of one of the lesser-known Jewish Middle Eastern communities. It is highly recommended for academic libraries, especially those with collections on the Middle East, North Africa, and ethnic studies.

Rachel Simon, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

**Hughes, Aaron W. and Elliot R. Wolfson, eds.** *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010. 362 p. \$ 75.00 (ISBN 978-0-25330-031-7).

How can the vast field of Jewish philosophy, from different times and places, be made relevant to the present and the future? Ten qualified contributors explore such topics as the secular and religious approach to Jewish philosophy, gender role and participation in Jewish mysticism, relationships between Judaism and the Hebrew language, atheistic theology and the real God, and the role of Jewish sources in furthering the cause of universal ethical-political justice. An interesting essay by Almut Sh. Bruckstein, "Textual Body Landscapes and the Artist's Geometry of Talmud," uses four black-and-white artistic illustrations to demonstrate how artists, together with scholars, safeguard the "matter of humanity." The book includes notes and an index. *New Directions in Jewish Philosophy* belongs in academic collections. It assumes considerable prior knowledge of the subject.

Nira Wolfe, San Diego, CA

**Kligman, Mark L.** *Maqam and Liturgy: Ritual, Music and Aesthetics of Syrian Jews in Brooklyn*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009. 267 p. + 1 compact disc. \$34.95 (ISBN 978-0-8143-3216-0).

The Syrian Jewish community of Brooklyn has a uniquely complex and beautiful system of liturgical music. The music is chiefly derived from the *maqamot*, the modes of traditional Arabic music. Each week, the Shabbat morning services employ different melodies based on the maqam of the week, which is thematically related to the Torah reading of the week. Kligman does a masterful job exploring both the musical and sociological

dimensions of the prayer service. He details every aspect of the service in a way that is clear to the uninitiated and insightful for those already familiar with Syrian practice. The book is accompanied by a CD to give a flavor of the chanting, which cannot be fully captured with musical notation. *Maqam and Liturgy* is highly recommended, in particular, for collections with a focus on Jewish music and Syrian Jews.

Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

**Koren, Zalmen Menachem.** *The Beit HaMikdash: The Temple & The Holy Mount.* Brooklyn: Shaar Press/Mesorah Pub., 2009. 221 p. \$89.99 (ISBN 978-1-42260-955-2).

This visually stunning heirloom brings together the wisdom of the Mishnah, Talmud and the classic commentaries with archaeological findings, legends, traditions associated with the Beit HaMikdash, and the ancient historian Josephus. It includes hundreds of photographs, pull-out, three-dimensional diagrams from many different perspectives, detailed descriptions of the Beit HaMikdash, and a unique visual tour. Koren describes the mitzvah to build a Temple, the significance of the site, the influence and spiritual importance of the Temple even after the Hurban, aspirations to see the Temple rebuilt, and the model built by the Western Wall Heritage Foundation and placed in the Western Wall tunnels. This volume is recommended for all libraries. It can fill gaps in knowledge help those who visit the Kotel better understand its awesome significance.

David B. Levy, Brooklyn, NY

**Kurzweil, Arthur, ed.** *Pebbles of Wisdom from Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Wiley, 2009. 350 p. \$24.95. (ISBN 978-0-470-48592-7).

Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz has been dubbed “a genius of the highest order” and “a man for all seasons—as well versed in fundamental Jewish texts as he is in modern literature and scientific studies.” Steinsaltz is the author of over 60 books, including a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud. Arthur Kurzweil, an author, publisher, and teacher, has maintained a long and close friendship with the rabbi, and has been collecting bits of his wisdom for over 30 years. He compiled these “pebbles” from conversations, colleagues, periodic literature, and Rabbi Steinsaltz’s writings. Each is a sentence or two, brought together under a subject heading. There are thoughts about the soul, the pursuit of happiness, the Jewish family in jeopardy, and many other spiritual matters. These are followed by notes, which are additional pebbles from published sources that relate to the unpublished ones. There is a glossary and an excellent index. It is the index and the interest in Rabbi Steinsaltz’s thoughts on specific subjects that will drive the use of this book, as it is a reference work more than one for recreational reading. Rabbi Steinsaltz’s works are essential books for Jewish libraries; this volume is a strong optional purchase for libraries that own them.

Kathe Pinchuck, MTS Company, Brooklyn, NY

**Lamm, Norman.** *The Royal Table: A Passover Haggadah.* Edited by Joel B. Wolowelsky. New York: OU Press, 2010. 199 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 9781-6-0280-139-4).

According to Wikipedia, over 1,100 different Haggadot were published between 1900 and 1960. In some Haggadot, the editor

selects passages from a commentator’s writings and attaches them to the text of the Haggadah. In these cases, the editor feels that a prominent personality has something important to say with regard to the Haggadah. *The Royal Table* obviously belongs to this category.

Professor Lamm’s sermons are the major source for the commentary and are rich in content. One is very conscious of what part of the Haggadah speaks to him. The treatment of the four sons, for example, is very extensive. Lamm also dwells on the significance of the bitter herbs. A recurring theme in his writing is the debt that we owe to God. The book concludes with a series of short essays on The Song of Songs, which are certainly to be recommended.

This is a very rich commentary, but has one disadvantage. Since Rabbi Lamm did not set out to publish an edition of the Haggadah by himself, there are lacunae in the commentary. I would have appreciated more material on the piyyutim in the final part of the Haggadah, for example. Still this is a Haggadah well worth acquiring.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

**Landy, Yehuda.** *Purim and the Persian Empire: A Historical, Archeological and Geographical Perspective.* New York: Feldheim Publishers, 2010. 104 p. \$34.99 (ISBN-978-1-59826-519-4).

This beautiful, large-format, richly-illustrated book is Rabbi Landy’s attempt to bring together archeological evidence, the text of Megillat Esther, and historical information from secondary sources. The author provides a general outline of the historical period and explains the relation between the Jewish texts, including midrash and Tanach, and the times and places. Rabbi Landy includes a short bibliography but he makes some statements that are not substantiated. For example he states “the majority of scholars identify Achashverosh with the Persian king known by the Greeks as Xerxes...” without identifying the scholars. There is a good deal of extraneous material in the book that does not advance the reader’s understanding of the topic and is at best very elegant padding. The book contains magnificent illustrations of bas reliefs of Persian monarchs and their entourages, of banquet vessels, and of archeological sites including the city of Shushan. I recommend this book as a rich recap of the British Museum exhibit that inspired it. It would be interesting to compare this book with the exhibition catalog. They may well complement one another.

Marion M. Stein, NY

**Levine, Shalom Dovber, ed.** *Mi-bet ha-Genuzim, Treasures from the Chabad Library: Rare Volumes, Manuscripts, Letters, Documents, Sacred Objects, Marriage Contracts, Portraits & Photographs selected from the Central Chabad Lubavitch Library and Archive Center.* Brooklyn, NY: Kehot Publication Society, 2009. 564 p. \$49.95 (ISBN 978-0-82660-657-0).

Reading this volume has been a delight. The book presents itself in the dress of a lavish exhibition catalog, though it is a compilation of descriptions that have been written and published elsewhere over many years. It has both a Hebrew and an English section. While it appears that the Hebrew is the original text, the English is not always a simple translation. Sometimes the Hebrew

is fuller; sometimes the English. The text is accompanied by many striking color photographs. A feature particularly noteworthy in this age of mass production is the fact that the book block has been hand sewn with the grain so that the book lies flat when opened, facilitating easy and comfortable reading.

Apart from its featured rare books and codex manuscripts, the Chabad Library holds many autograph manuscripts and artifacts that enhance one's appreciation of the books themselves. The library returns us to an age when it was common for libraries to hold artifacts of all sorts in addition to books. Together they tell a single story enlightening us about traditional Eastern European Judaism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The prefaces are particularly interesting outlines of the history of the collections and descriptions of the facility itself.

I heartily recommend *Treasures from the Chabad Library* for both individual and institutional purchase. The price is right and there is much to learn here for both beginners and more advanced students.

Daniel J. Rettberg, *Hebrew Union College-JIR, Cincinnati, OH*

**Liska, Vivian.** *When Kafka Says We: Uncommon Communities in German-Jewish Literature.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009. 239 p. \$29.95 (ISBN 978-0-25335-308-5).

Discerning and analyzing identity—whether individual or communal—through the analysis of literary works of any writer is a common critical practice. Choosing to do so from within the writings of a writer like Franz Kafka who had a “wavering and often tormented relationship to Judaism and Jews” is original and creative. Liska examines “the social, cultural, and historical contexts of this ambivalence [and] its biographical, political, and psychological motivations” in the works of twentieth-century authors who write in German. In addition to Kafka, the works of Theodor Herzl, Else Lasker-Schuller, Paul Celan, and Nelly Sachs are explored for unconventional approaches to issues of identity and community.

Liska's thematic analyses of poetry and prose by these and other authors, uncovers an often-ambivalent relationship between a collective identity perceived to be out there, and the individual identity seeking, exploring, and often rejecting (or being rejected by) the “we” components that define being Jewish. This book is a good read for lovers of Kafka and German-Jewish authors. It is highly recommended for academic libraries that collect in the areas of twentieth-century Jewish literature, literary representations of the Holocaust, German and Austrian literature, and identity formation in literature.

Dr. Yaffa Weisman, *Hebrew Union College-JIR, Los Angeles, CA*

**Megdal, Howard.** *The Baseball Talmud: The Definitive Position-by-Position Ranking of Baseball's Chosen Players.* New York: HarperCollins, 2009. 320 p. \$22.99 (ISBN 978-0-06155-843-6).

This is a compilation of the history of almost every Jewish baseball player that ever played in the Big Leagues. The author starts the book with biographical sketches of Hank Greenberg and Sandy Koufax. The book is filled with bios of all the players from the early pre-WWI days to the present. Every listing has the stats, HRs, RBIs, games won, and lost. Descriptions of the plays of the best teams and how they won pennants are included.

The book concludes with a list of the unbeatable “all-time Jewish team.” The roster includes, Harry Danning, Hank Greenberg, Al Rosen, Lou Boudreau, Sid Gordon, Sandy Koufax, and many others. Mr. Megdal is to be congratulated for this enjoyable book.

Lee Wixman, *Boynton Beach, FL*

**Morin, Edgar.** *Vidal and His Family: From Salonica to Paris, The Story of a Sephardic Family in the Twentieth Century.* Translated by Alfonso Montuori. Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2008. 330 p. \$37.50 (ISBN 978-1-84519-274-7)

Edgar Morin, a renowned French intellectual, has written a testament to his father, a biography of a very complex and interesting person, and much more. Vidal Nahum's life spanned most of the twentieth century and this book includes many excerpts from his own memoir, interwoven appropriately, and italicized so that the reader can easily distinguish his voice from that of his son.

Vidal Nahum was born in 1894, the youngest son of a large, well-established Sephardic family from Salonica. The book describes a many-branched family and the intertwining lives of a very big clan whose members wandered throughout the Middle East, Europe, and beyond, in search of livelihood, peace, and a place to grow roots. In that sense, the book is not only about Morin's father and his extended family, but about Sephardic Jewry and its almost-millennium-long history, dating back to prior to the expulsion from Spain all the way to the present.

The book is well written although it could have used better editing. It is truly a saga worth reading for the light it sheds on a subject not often described in readable, compelling publications. It is recommended for libraries with extensive Jewish history collections, including specifically Sephardic history.

Michlean Amir, *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC*

**Muller, Jerry Z.** *Capitalism and the Jews.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. 267 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-0-69114-478-8).

The author, professor of history at Catholic University, draws on a wide range of disciplines—history, religion, politics, economics, even sociology—to examine the reciprocity between the Jews and the development of capitalism in Western civilization. The role of Jews as merchants and moneylenders in Christian medieval Europe is already known, as the prohibition of usury and the exclusion of Jews from guilds forged a network of banking societies. Yet the Jewish connection to commerce began long before then and the author mentions the biblical work ethic and the prevalence of Jewish merchants in antiquity. Classic theories show the appeal of and the ambivalence toward capitalism, particularly considering the secular upheavals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (ironically fostered by wealth and prosperity). Jews were truly a paradox—on the one hand, praised by intellectuals like Montesquieu as the “middlemen” to advance European culture; on the other, vilified by anti-Semites as exploiters, competitors and corrupters of traditional feudal society. Jewish idealists—the most extreme case being Karl Marx—sought outside acceptance by rejecting the money culture and embracing communism or nationalist movements, particularly Zionism.



Again, results were often tragic. By altering the fabric of both Jewish and European life, capitalism has been rightfully called "the art of creative destruction."

The book includes extensive footnotes. The writing is forceful yet elegant. *Capitalism and the Jews* is fascinating for its broad and insightful depiction of Jewish influence in the world arena. Recommended for all academic libraries.

Hallie Cantor, Yeshiva University, NY

**Neustein, Amy, ed. *Tempest in the Temple: Jewish Communities & Child Sex Scandals*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press (Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture and Life), 2009. 272 p. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-1-58465-671-5).**

This work should be required reading for parents and Jewish community leaders. It is a series of essays dealing with the problem of abuse of children by adults in positions of responsibility within the Jewish community, with a foreword by Elliot Dorff, a preface by Jeremy Rosen, and an epilogue by Dane S. Claussen.

The first section includes a known case of abuse, and continues with a discussion of how to supervise religious leaders in order to prevent such situations. The second section deals with the victim. The Jewish community and especially the Orthodox Jewish community is terrified of negative publicity and the victim is often under pressure not to complain. This section includes documented cases of the perversion of justice to "protect" the community. The third section looks at solutions. I was especially impressed by the essay by Robert Weiss, which explains how people in positions of responsibility can navigate through such a situation. How does one determine if there was abuse? How does one handle the accused and how does one handle the victim?

Also of interest is an essay on the experience of Catholic volunteers in setting up group support for victims of abuse. After reading this book, I was left with a very strong lesson as to how vulnerable our children really are!

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

**Nirenberg, Jud. *Samson's Walls*. UK: Paul Mould Publishing, 2009. 163 p. \$23.00 (ISBN 978-1-158690-102-8).**

Everyone thinks of Samson as the powerful biblical figure from the Book of Judges who defended the Hebrews from the Philistines. But who was Samson, and what can we learn from the story? Jud Nirenberg examines Samson against the backdrop of conflict in the ancient Middle East and offers some hints into Samson's character and the legend.

Samson's two wives betrayed him by coaxing him to reveal secrets. His first wife, a Philistine woman, urged Samson to tell her the answer to a riddle, leading Samson to lose a bet with other Philistines and make them his enemies. Delilah, his second wife, convinced Samson to reveal the secret behind his famous strength. Samson was torn between his desire to feel loved and his need for security. His trust in Delilah led to the story's dramatic ending.

Nirenberg asserts that Samson felt like a social outcast. As a *nazir*, he could not cut his hair or beard, nor could he drink intoxicants. These restrictions made him different from other people and limited the way Samson could socialize with friends. To the Orthodox reader, Samson could be a model for observing

religious restrictions despite the inconvenience. What else can we learn? Nirenberg notes that Samson was the Hebrew answer to the Greek Hercules. He ponders the fact that the name Samson comes from the Hebrew *shemesh* (sun) while Delilah comes from *lailah* (night). In the end, day is killed by night. Samson's story has not been studied to the extent that the stories of Moses, David, Esther, and others have. Nirenberg shows that the story of Samson has much to teach us. Recommended for synagogue, center and academic libraries.

Lee Haas, Temple Emanu El, Cleveland, OH

**Orenstein, Walter. *A Window to the Siddur: An Analysis of the Themes in Jewish Prayer*. Jerusalem; New York: Urim Publications, 2009. 301 p. \$23.95 (ISBN: 978-965-524-032-0)**

Although some people might shy away from books on Jewish text analysis due to their inevitable complexity, Walter Orenstein has hit on an ingenious idea which makes his book, *A Window to the Siddur*, palatable to the layperson: it is in dialogue format, telling the "story" of a husband and wife who are learning the themes of the siddur together. The book covers weekday and Shabbat services, halachah, hashkafah and history, and is a great addition to Jewish library collections of all types.

Shoshana Hurwitz, Hurwitz Indexing, Ma'ale Adumim, Israel

**Pomson, Alex, and Howard Deitcher, eds. *Jewish Day Schools, Jewish Communities*. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009. 414 p. \$24.95 (ISBN 978-1-90411-374-4).**

Editors Alex Pomson (senior lecturer at the Melton Center for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University) and Howard Deitcher (director of the Melton Center) collected papers presented at a 2006 conference, convened at the Melton Center. Is this book going to help your community create and maintain a Jewish day school? No. This collection of academic essays and studies addresses the relationship (or sometimes, lack of relationship) between Jewish day schools and the Jewish and secular communities in which they are set. It is not light reading. Readers with an academic interest in Jewish day schools, whether from an educational or diaspora Judaism standpoint, will enjoy the papers. I found the essays on Jewish day schools in North American communities to be most interesting. Recommended for larger synagogue libraries in communities with Jewish day schools and for academic libraries with diaspora and/or education collections.

Rachel M. Minkin, Congregation Kehillat Israel;  
Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI

**Roll, Yisroel. *Step Up to the Plate: Baseball, Judaism & How to Win the Game of Life*. Southfield, MI: Targum Press. 142 p. \$17.99 (ISBN 978-1-56871-523-0).**

This addition to the ever-growing collection of books on connecting with God attempts to link the skills and strategies of the "American pastime" with Jewish wisdom. Each of the twenty-three chapters contains a baseball activity—hitting, running the bases, etc.—and links it to Jewish learning. For example, the author identifies God as "The Commissioner of Baseball," and explains that the "fundamentals of the game" are Shabbat, kashrut, and family purity. After providing a basic explanation of a baseball event, the author makes an analogy with Jewish

life (most of the examples are direct), and relates it to the larger world—how to live our lives better. There are frequent references to Talmudic teachings, but they are not esoteric or dense. The language is conversational, and the author is comfortable with the concepts.

*Step Up to the Plate* contains a sensible approach to religious education. My biggest question is “who is the intended reader?” While it could certainly be useful to men who are fans of the game, the style appears to be directed to teens, rather than a more mature readership. On the other hand, its pleasant, conversational language may be just the thing that connects with some adult readers.

Fred Isaac, Temple Sinai, Oakland, CA

**Rubin, Nissan.** *New Rituals, Old Societies: Invented Rituals in Contemporary Israel.* Boston: Academic Studies Press (Judaism and Jewish Life). 2009. 200 p. \$59.00 (ISBN 978-1-93484-335-2).

This is a collection of major essays by Professor Rubin, a prominent Israeli anthropologist, that have previously appeared in other places. The essays discuss “rites of passage” in a secular society. Four out of the seven essays discuss death, and a fifth discusses retirement.

Two of the essays, apparently written together with his students, are highly original. One discusses the changes in personality and attitudes of people who have undergone an operation to remove fat because of obesity. This is the only essay that describes research in which most of the participants were happy with the change! The second essay examines the retirement process of a sample of regular soldiers who have served 20 years or more in the Israeli army. There the sample is mixed. Some soldiers were happy to retire, others not. This is an academic work of interest to students of anthropology and of Israeli society.

Chaim Seymour, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

**Shapiro, Rami, ed.** *Tanya, the Masterpiece of Hasidic Wisdom: Selections Annotated and Explained.* Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Publishing, 2010. 178 p. \$16.99 (ISBN 978-1-59473-275-1).

Bringing out a new edition of a classic text is always a perilous venture. Should one translate? Should one paraphrase? Should one abridge? Should one offer a long preface and an extensive set of notes, or should one keep one’s own comments to a minimum, leaving the reader as much as possible alone with the original? For what sort of audience is one writing—scholarly or popular, insider or neophyte?

Rabbi Shapiro has opted for what is perhaps the most difficult and dangerous approach. He abridges and paraphrases, trying to take this classic of Jewish spirituality out of its eighteenth-century Hebrew language and Eastern European environment, and present it to a modern western, not necessarily Jewish, audience. This is both a compliment to the original author, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first of the Chabad rebbes, and inevitably a risk. The editor excludes long quotations and complex cabalistic references and at times changes the tone of the text. Where Rabbi Shneur Zalman is addressing his own disciples and is sometimes not above being critical and offering warnings, Rabbi Shapiro is addressing spiritual seekers with

little or no Jewish background and is not above accentuating the positive and omitting threatening passages. To his credit he seems judicious in his approach, and in his preface offers this book as only a beginning. He encourages those who wish to gain a detailed understanding of this material to seek out a Chabad teacher. Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi’s preface is also very helpful in preparing the reader for what is to come.

Rabbi Shapiro has prepared a text that should be a help to the beginner and more advanced student alike; it is not just a translation, but a guide to timeless and universal ideas. I highly recommend Rabbi Shapiro’s “Tanya” for all libraries with collections in Judaism and spirituality.

Daniel J. Rettberg, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Cincinnati, OH

**Sherwin, Byron.** *The Life Worth Living: Faith in Action.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009. 165 p. \$18 (ISBN 978-0-8028-6293-8).

Dr. Byron L. Sherwin, a student of Abraham Joshua Heschel, is a prolific writer and scholar. In *The Life Worth Living*, Sherwin argues that the quest for piety is a never-ending one and may be attained by all people of good faith as long as they never cease living an ethical life—always an elusive pursuit. He states early on in the book that living an ethical life necessarily creates anxiety. There are, of course, no easy answers just as there are no simple questions.

The wisdom of one’s teachers and one’s conscience must guide a person through the bumpiness of day-to-day existence. People must always see themselves accountable to their ancestors and to the as-yet unborn generations. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve tried to “out-politic” God, so to speak. They evaded moral responsibility, and that created a chaotic universe and a Tower of Babel-like existence. Society can continue to thrive only if citizens take responsibility for their actions.

Dr. Sherwin correctly points out that the history of mankind may largely be seen as a pursuit of happiness. But happiness may never be defined exclusively in terms of one’s own pleasure or emotions. Life must be lived with exquisite care and humility and must never diminish the quality of life lived by one’s neighbors, friends and family.

This book belongs in seminary libraries and would even be appropriate for medical school library collections because of the wide range of ethical topics addressed. There is a bibliography but, unfortunately, no index.

Morton J. Merowitz, Buffalo, NY

**Simon, Charles.** *Building a Successful Volunteer Culture: Finding Meaning in Service in the Jewish Community.* Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2009. 172 p. \$16.99 (ISBN 978-1-58023-408-5).

Does your synagogue rely heavily on volunteers? Are you a volunteer at your shul? If you answered “yes” to either question, chances are you’ve experienced motivation issues. How does an institution (not just a synagogue) motivate members to volunteer? And as a volunteer, what keeps members motivated?

Rabbi Charles Simon, executive director of the Federation of Jewish Men’s Clubs, tackles these issues from both an organization’s and a volunteer’s perspectives. Using his own experiences as examples, Rabbi Simon illustrates how synagogues might

overburden or scare away potential volunteers as well as how organizations can deal with “problematic” volunteers.

The solution, according to Rabbi Simon, is to analyze the requirements of the synagogue as well as those of the volunteers and match the passions of the volunteers with the needs of the organization. This is not necessarily an easy task: leaders must address questions about their leadership style and how they manage problematic situations and people.

In this easily readable, entertaining book, Rabbi Simon does not just provide easy answers. This book serves as a guide and template for leaders and volunteers alike. Strongly recommended for synagogue collections of any size, as well as other secular non-profits leaning more and more on volunteers.

Rachel M. Minkin, *Congregation Kehillat Israel;  
Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI*

**Spiro, Ken.** *Crash Course in Jewish History: From Abraham to Modern Israel.* Southfield, MI: Targum Press, 2010. 484 p. \$31.99 (ISBN 978-1-56871-532-2).

This book is an overview of 4,000 years of Jewish history. From Abraham to the conquest of Canaan, the Exile, the Inquisition, the Holocaust, and the modern State of Israel, every important historical moment is included. Spiro devotes just a few pages to each period in Jewish history, offering a watered-down version of events for the sake of simplicity and accessibility. This book is very similar (in many instances word for word) to the series presented by the author on the aish.com Web site.

The book includes several chronological tables that are useful to understanding the sequence of events. The index presents some problems, for example, the entry for Salonica refers to page 318, but that page is blank. This book could be helpful and even entertaining to patrons who have a negligible Jewish education. It might be a good resource for non-Jews who want an overview of Jewish history or for anyone who would like a quick refresher course. For collections used by patrons with more Jewish knowledge or for research purposes, this diluted history will be irrelevant.

Sonia Smith, *McGill University, Montreal*

**Stadler, Nurit.** *Yeshiva Fundamentalism: Piety, Gender, and Resistance in the Ultra-Orthodox World.* New York: New York University Press, 2009. 196 p. \$39 (ISBN 978-0-81474-049-1).

The author, an anthropologist teaching at the Hebrew University, set out to examine a male bastion, the world of the ultra-Orthodox yeshivot (Talmudic academies). Surprisingly, she found 30 students willing to be interviewed. That was most certainly the hardest part of the research! The interviews were supplemented by primary literature mostly written for yeshiva students.

Dr. Stadler makes the very valid point that the yeshiva world in Israel differs from that in other countries. In Israel, there is a concerted effort among the Ultra-Orthodox to divert the youth to the yeshivot, and only a small percent of them work. Their exemption from the army places yeshiva students at odds with the rest of Israeli society. There is a feeling among many of the respondents that the current situation is untenable. Placing the burden of providing for the family on the wife alone has become increasingly difficult. Professor Stadler claims that the yeshiva society is dynamic, and points out that husbands in yeshivas

are more involved than others with their families. She also adds examples of ultra-Orthodox contributions to general society.

For anybody who follows the activities in Ultra-Orthodox society in Israel, it is clear that the society is changing and one wonders what will happen next. This is an interesting and well-written book. Whoever sits down to read it will not be sorry!

Chaim Seymour, *Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, Judith.** *The Incredible Adventures of Buffalo Bill from Bochnia (68715): The Story of a Galician Jew, Persecution, Liberation Transformation.* Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009. 235 p. \$34.95 (ISBN 978-1-84519-380-5).

I read this book with the advantage/disadvantage of having participated in two or three courses taught by the author. I know her as a highly serious educator with a special sense of humor. This book is not an historical text, but a biography of the author's father, an Ostjude who survived five years in concentration camps, saved many people, and lived an eventful life after the war. The book is well written, portraying the subject very closely with a careful attempt to explain the historical context of the events. The author also examines the problem of moral choice in extreme situations. Although the biographer is too close to the subject of her work and the problem of perspective arises, it is a minor problem to my mind. I was reading a thriller in parallel and it was the thriller that I neglected. Be warned!

Chaim Seymour, *Bar-Ilan University, Israel*

**Vinitzky-Seroussi, Vered.** *Yitzhak Rabin's Assassination and the Dilemmas of Commemoration.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press (SUNY Series in Anthropology and Judaic Studies), 2009. 213 p. \$70.00 (ISBN 978-1-4384-2831-4).

This is not so much an examination of an Israeli political assassination, a topic perhaps better covered in Yoram Peri's *The Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin* (Stanford University Press, 2000), as a case study of collective memory and commemoration of the death of a prominent Israeli political leader. Indeed it is not until the second half of the text that the name of Rabin's assassin appears.

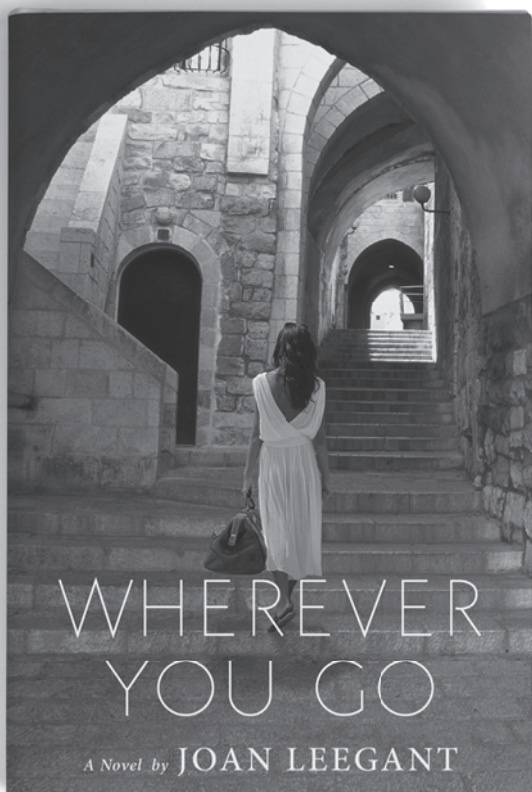
The approach is a sociological investigation of a cultural system, in this case, the Israeli one. The analysis involves memory, time, space, the various components of the narrative, and the commemoration from the perspective of the conflicted dialogue that took place during the victim's lifetime. The author examines how Rabin's memory was processed through the Israeli cultural prism. How has commemoration evolved over time? How does the observer better understand Israeli society by examining how it commemorates the murder of a Jewish leader by an observant Jew in a Jewish society? The text tends to be dense and is thus best appreciated by those familiar with sociology and its literature.

Sanford R. Silverburg, *Catawba College, Salisbury, NC*

**Weinstein, Roni.** *Juvenile Sexuality, Kabbalah, and Catholic Reformation in Italy: "Tiferet Bahurim" by Pinhas Barukh Ben Pelatiah Monselice.* Leiden: Brill, 2009, 452 p. \$185.00. (ISBN 978-9-00416-757-9).

Roni Weinstein, an Israeli historian of early modern Jewish Italy, presents a “micro-history,” looking at the changes occurring in Jewish Italian society through a critical examination of





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an unpublished manuscript from mid-seventeenth century Ferrara. *Tiferet Bahurim* (The Glory of Youth), by R. Pinhas Barukh Monselice, is a guide for young men about to marry. A pioneering work in Jewish advice literature, the work includes instruction to young men on how to choose a marriage partner, how to behave through the engagement and the wedding, and how to manage family life, with advice on sexual behavior.

Weinstein explores how the increasing spread of kabbalistic traditions played a role in Monselice's presentation of the importance of proper intention and mental devotion during marital sexual relations. Weinstein shows how this was part of a trend in both Jewish and Catholic counter-Reformation society to increase control over adolescent behavior and sexuality and proper religious belief in favor of a more ascetic life style.

Weinstein provides a rich documentation of the Ferrara community, the history of *musar* and advice literature, changing practices of marriage, parallel works in Christian Italy, the role of the printing press in spreading ideas, and the efforts of the cultural elite to influence popular culture. The full Hebrew text of the manuscript is included at the end. The book is recommended for academic libraries with graduate level collections in Jewish history and culture, gender studies, and the history of sexuality and the body.

*Harvey Sukenic, Hebrew College Library, Newton Centre, MA*

**Wolfson, Elliot R. *Open Secret: Postmessianic Messianism and the Mystical Revision of Menahem Mendel Schneerson*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009. \$35.00 (ISBN 978-0-231-14630-2).**

Chabad philosophy is an important contribution to classical Jewish thought, and is very much in need of those outside its world who have a sympathetic understanding and are able to offer a balanced explanation of it. Elliott Wolfson has the potential to be one of those interpreters. As even a casual glance through the pages of this book should indicate, he has both a broad and a deep knowledge of Chabad primary sources.

This book will, however, be a tremendous disappointment to those seeking a guide into the Chasidic world. It is not written for them. *Open Secret* is clearly pitched to professional academics and students of western philosophy. The book cries out for a good copy editor; its chapters are far too long and its dialogue too full of terminology not to be found in a typical desk dictionary. Wolfson's translations are full of philosophical vocabulary that unduly complicates his subject and, to my mind, sometimes confuses the issue. I am particularly unhappy with his categorizing of Chabad as "Quietism." If there is one principle that is the basis of Chabad it is "Doing is the main thing!" as Wolfson himself acknowledges. I am also bothered by his continual translation of "avodah" as "worship" rather than as "service."

This book will find a home in a few academic libraries where it will likely sit on the shelf unread. That is sad, because had Columbia only given it the treatment it deserved it could have been so much more.

*Daniel J. Rettberg, Hebrew Union College-JIR, Cincinnati, OH*



## SOUND RECORDINGS

**Axum. *Axum*. New York : JDub, 2010. 1 compact disc. \$17.99.**

I can't stop listening to this disc. So much of our perspective of Israel from Huts la-Arets (in the Diaspora) is focused on religion and/or politics, we tend to forget that there is more to Israeli culture. Axum is a hip-hop/dancehall duo from Netanya. The two MCs have Ethiopian and Mizrahi roots and Caribbean accents, and the music, supplied by DJ crew Soulico has deep Jamaican and Mediterranean influences. While some Israeli rappers such as Subliminal and ha-Dag Nahash focus on politics, and others, like Fishi ha-Gadol have discovered religion, Axum is all about the party and what's going on in the neighborhood. The disc also features an all-star cast of upcoming Israeli rappers and singers, most notably Noa Faran and C. Le, Peled and Ortega. School librarians should note that there are a few songs with sexually suggestive lyrics, but this might also be the incentive your students need to improve their Hebrew. Yalla balagan!

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**HaOman Hai Ensemble. *Kulmus HaNefesh: A Musical Journey into the Hassidic Niggun*. Jerusalem: Jewish Music Research Centre, 2009. 1 compact disc. \$20.00. CJM0901.**

André Hajdu is best known as a composer, pianist, and educator, but he is also an ethnomusicologist, specializing in the music of Lubavitch Hasidim. For Kulmus HaNefesh, he combines these facets of his musical personality. The Oman Hai Ensemble, made up of Hajdu and his former students, takes traditional Habad nigunim and, through group arrangements and improvisation, makes them their own. The worlds of folk music, western art music, and group improvisation are seamlessly intertwined and juxtaposed. A single subtle note from the piano often changes the atmosphere of the piece radically. The accompanying booklet meticulously details the source material of these compositions. This recording is the first in a series of contemporary Jewish music from the Hebrew University's Jewish Music Research Centre. The series is dedicated to new experimental music that is strongly rooted in traditional sources. A very promising start to an intriguing new series of recordings.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Sparks, Tim. *Little Princess*. New York : Tzadik, 2009. 1 compact disc. \$16.00. TZ8143.**

Naftule Brandwein was one of the most influential klezmer musicians in the 1920s. An extravagant showman and a consummate musician, his performances were legendary. For decades, his recordings were out of print and cassettes of dubs of his old 78s were passed around klezmer aficionados. With the re-release of these recordings in the late '90s a whole new generation was exposed to Brandwein's music.

Tim Sparks, a fingerstyle guitarist grounded in country blues and trained in classical music has, in recent years, been exploring world music and in particular eastern European Jewish music. His arrangements of Brandwein's music prove that even divorced from their klezmer context, the tunes still hold up well. *Little Princess* is Sparks's fourth recording of Jewish music for the Radical Jewish Culture series on John Zorn's Tzadik label and he is backed by veteran Tzadik artists Greg Cohen on bass and

Cyro Baptista on percussion. The music is immediately accessible, yet contains hidden depths. My only complaint is that the percussion is a bit loud in the mix, at times, overpowering the guitar and bass. Highly recommended.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

## VIDEO RECORDINGS

**Czernowin, Chaya. *Pnima = Ins innere*. New York: Mode, 2006. \$29.99. 1 DVD. Mode 169.**

**Czernowin, Chaya. *Maim*. New York: Mode, 2010. \$17.98. Mode 219.**

*Pnima* is not an opera in the traditional sense. There is no libretto. The singers are offstage singing vocalise while onstage, two actors wordlessly communicate the complex psychology of the story. The opera is loosely based on the story "Momik" from David Grossman's *Ayen Erekh: Ahavah (See Under: Love)*. The two actors are a Holocaust survivor and his grandson. The Old Man never recovered from the horrors of the Shoah and attempts to communicate his story to the boy, who is unable to understand, yet is himself damaged by the experience. The singers are accompanied by the Munich Chamber Orchestra and a small group of soloists who worked closely with the composer. The opera's introduction is of an improvisatory character and can get tedious, but once we are in the meat of the work, the music is quite powerful, and capable of communicating deep emotion.

The score makes use of extended techniques, live electronics and unusual instrumentation: the musical saw and the use of rice and branches on percussion instruments. The sound world this opera inhabits touches on the German avant-garde of the '50s and '60s, and the French spectralists of the '80s, but is, at its core, unique.

*Maim* is a large-scale, three-movement orchestral work with five solo instruments: tubax (a saxophone-tuba hybrid), oboe, keyboards, guitar, and viola. The movements *Mayim zarim*, *Mayim genuvim* The Memory of Water, and *Mei Macha'a* evoke water in its different states. The work was composed at the time of the outbreak of the second Intifada and that violence is heard, yet the music is filled with nuance.

*Daniel Scheide, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL*

**Loeterman, Ben. *The People v. Leo Frank*. Boston: BLPI, 2009. DVD 90 min. Educational version with customized clips and teacher's guide, \$69.95; version for private home use, \$29.95.**

The discovery of young Mary Phagan's body in the basement of a pencil factory run by Leo Frank in 1913 resulted in one of the nation's most notorious trials. It took place in Atlanta, as the South was beginning to modernize. This film, produced for PBS, is an engrossing mixture of dramatized sequences taken from primary sources related to the case and interviews with historians, politicians, and descendants of the participants. It effectively portrays the racial, religious, class, and regional prejudices in the society at that time. It also shows the tremendous power of the press, which both vilified and defended Leo Frank. Frank was an outsider, a Jewish Yankee from New York. His nervous manner made the police suspect him, despite a lack of evidence. When the deficiencies of the case came to light after a guilty verdict,

Frank received a commuted sentence, allowing him to avoid the death penalty. A group of Georgia's political elite decided to take matters into their own hands and formed a lynch mob to hang him. The grand jury investigating the matter had seven members of the lynch mob on it. The Anti-Defamation League became a strong advocate of civil rights for all as a result of this case. The Ku Klux Klan also reconstituted itself with an expanded mission of hatred against blacks, Catholics, and Jews. This is an excellent film for middle- and high-school students and adults.

*Barbara M. Bibel, Oakland Public Library, Oakland, CA;  
Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley, CA*

**No. 4 Street of Our Lady. Dir. by Barbara Bird, Judy Maltz, and Richie Sherman. Prod. Seventh Art Releasing. Alden Films, 2009. DVD, 90 min. \$59.95. (ISBN 978-1-877684-03-6).**

The title of the film refers to the address of Francisca Halamajowa in Sokal (now Ukraine). This amazing woman and her daughter, Helena Liniewska, who were recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations" by the State of Israel in 1986, hid sixteen people during World War II. Three of them, who were children at the time, return to see the house and hayloft above the pigsty where they lived for almost two years. According to people who had lived in the area, others were aware that Halamajowa was hiding Jews, but they didn't say anything. To protect herself and those she was sheltering, her daughter used to give parties for German soldiers in the house. On July 19, 1944, when the Soviets liberated the area, everyone came out of hiding. Unbeknownst to one another, there was a family of three in the basement, a German soldier who deserted hiding in the attic, and two families from the hayloft. The film ends with a postscript of what happened to those who hid. Mrs. Halamajowa died in 1960, and had kept her heroism a secret.

The film is choppy as it switches between past and present, color film and archival footage, and among the perspectives of the three survivors, an elderly aunt, three Holocaust experts, two eyewitnesses, and Halamajowa's granddaughters. It also moves slowly as it captures all these perspectives and the journey from the survivors' "normal lives" back to these life-changing events. The compelling content merits a high recommendation for all libraries. This film will also be a valuable teaching tool in high schools.

*Kathe Pinchuck, MTS Company, Brooklyn, NY*

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The AJL Newsletter editors  
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This year, AJL will participate in Library Snapshot Day, an ALA library advocacy initiative (see <http://tinyurl.com/y8nuunz>). It's easy and fun to participate and we want your library to be part of it!

Here's all you have to do:

1. Pick a single day during the week of November 1–7, 2010 (Monday through Sunday) for your Library Snapshot Day. During your chosen day, you will keep a head count of the number of people who visit your library. You may wish to plan a program that will bring in lots of people, but you are welcome to record a "typical" day in your library if you choose. Sunday November 7, 2010 is also the Global Day of Jewish Learning (see [www.1people1day.org/](http://www.1people1day.org/)); if you are planning an activity tied to that event you are welcome to double dip and use it for Library Snapshot Day too. If you are already planning a crowd-pleasing event for the following week, you may choose to use that date for your Library Snapshot Day, as long as you can send in your results by the deadline, November 17, 2010.

2. Along with your head count, please collect comments from visitors about how wonderful your library is (written, audio,

video, whatever works for you), and please take photographs. Pictures, pictures, pictures!

3. By Wednesday, November 17, 2010, send your head count, your comments, and your pictures to [pr@jewishlibraries.org](mailto:pr@jewishlibraries.org). Please be sure to include your name, your library name and address, and the type of library it is (synagogue, day school, community center, academic, special, other).



The results will be publicized during the first week of December, which coincides with Hanukkah. Our theme will be "Your Jewish library—a gift to your community!" Feel free to use the results of Library Snapshot Day as an advocacy tool within your own community to show the value of Jewish libraries in general and your library in particular. We anticipate publicizing our results through ALA, via the AJL Web site/blog/Facebook page/Twitter, via Hasafran, by e-newsletter to nonmembers, and through a press release to the media. AJL will also provide a fill-in-the-blanks press release that you can adapt to your library and use with your local media.